G861Ed
Class 244.401B Book v.1

General Theological Seminary Library

CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK

PRESENTED BY

Soc'y for Promoting Religion and Learning

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-BZQ-322

THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

By GREGORY OF TOURS

Oxford University Press
London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen
New York Toronto Melbourne Capetown
Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai
Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

By GREGORY OF TOURS

Translated
with an Introduction
by

Ormonde Maddock 1866-

O. M. DALTON, M.A., F.B.A., F.S.A.
Keeper of the Department of British and
Medieval Antiquities in the
British Museum

Volume I
INTRODUCTION

GEN. THEO. SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1927

~~274.401B~~
~~G861Ed~~

83988 v.1

DC
64
.G713
1927
v.1

GEN THEO SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the History of the Franks is of capital importance to the student of the sixth century, a complete English translation has hitherto been lacking. The fact is partly to be explained by the frequency of chapters which on a superficial view appear barren and unprofitable. The general reader, and the student not specially concerned with the sixth century, are easily repelled by these parts of the book, and to meet their needs a selection from the more striking chapters is legitimate ; the best treatment on these lines is that adopted by Prof. Bréhaut, who has linked his selected chapters by headings descriptive of all that come between, thus keeping the real structure of the book in view and preserving the sense of continuity. But the method of the selector, however well applied, cannot satisfy the advanced student or the specialist, for whom the matter omitted is so much lost territory to be recovered and explored. They know that bare ground may conceal beneath the surface things well worth examination, all of which escape the notice of the traveller speeding from one oasis to another ; they want the whole book and nothing less. They are aware that a real book is an organism of which not the conspicuous part alone, but every part, stands in a necessary relation to the whole, and that as the less attractive chapters are characteristic of their age, they cannot properly be disregarded ; if they are removed, the book is in so far impaired as a mirror of the times in which it was written.

The entire book should therefore be presented in an English version. It is beyond question the most important contemporary work on Gaul in the sixth century. Gibbon, indeed, declared in a foot-note that the original prologue to the Salic law expresses the genuine spirit of the Franks more forcibly than the ten books of Gregory of Tours. There is some truth in the contention if we add to the prologue the whole body of Frankish laws. These laws do in fact enable us, in some degree, to reconstruct Merovingian society and to divine the relations between Frank and Gallo-Roman. But the inferences to which they give rise yield us only general types ; the living individuals in their variety escape us ; we are left with vague and shadowy abstractions. The writings of Gregory, on the other hand, and more especially the History, bring us face to face with vivid personalities, with many of whom he was in frequent contact. A stage is set upon which they move as actors in a drama doubly real to us because Gregory himself was of their company. This is but one reason why the History is not to be displaced by the laws of the barbarians; the two sources of knowledge are complementary; the student must be familiar with both.

It remains to say a few words with regard to the present translation. The orthography of the Frankish proper names has presented various difficulties. Some of the most familiar among them have in the course of centuries received new forms now consecrated by common usage. The names which began as Chlodovech, Brunichild, and Guntchramn became Clovis, Brunhild, and Guntram; it seemed pedantic to revert to the originals, and the literary forms have been used. The Latin terminations, *us*, *es*, *is*, and *a*, regularly employed by Gregory, have mostly been dropped, as being essentially incongruous additions. Childebert is used for the Childebertus of the text, Ansovald for Ansovaldus, Bladast for Bladastes, Rigunth for Riguntis, Ingoberg for Ingoberga; the omission seems to divest the Teutonic forms of an unnecessary disguise. The Latin suffix has, however, been frequently left to the names of bishops as having a certain consonance with the Roman traditions and dignity of their office. Names partly latinized, like Theodoric, Theodebert, Leodovald, have been restored by changing *o* into *u*; they are rendered as Theuderic, Theudebert, Leudovald; an exception is made in the case of the great Ostrogothic king of Italy, who remains Theodoric both by prescriptive right and for convenience of distinction. It will be seen from the above that perfect consistency is not attained, but the defect is perhaps excused by the slight care for consistency of our author himself and his first transcribers; in the manuscripts upon which our text is based the name of the queen whom we style Brunhild is spelled in six different ways. As regards the names of places, the modern forms are almost always given, but the Latin equivalents are placed after them in brackets in the Index of Places and Peoples.

The addition by Gregory of supplementary matter (cf.

Introduction, p. 40) has introduced some complexity in the numeration of chapters in several Books, especially in IV–VI. That in Omont and Collon's text of 1913 (see p. viii and Introduction, p. 42) has been followed, though the inserted chapters have not been printed in smaller type, but are distinguished by numbers in italics. The intercalations have burdened with double numbers the original chapters of the Books in which they occur, e. g. IV. 35 (38); V. 14 (21); but the change need cause no confusion if it is remembered that in each case the first of the two numbers is that of the original sequence, the number in brackets that of the sequence which includes all the additions. Another point to be noted is that the chapter numbers in the Lists preceding the Books do not always agree with those in the Books themselves, the disagreement being most marked in the case of Bks. VI–VIII. For this discrepancy the copyists of the manuscripts are responsible, and as a rule it is vain to attempt co-ordination; the reader must rely upon the numeration in the Book rather than upon that of the introductory list. In Bk. VII, however, the numbers of the List and of the actual chapters have been co-ordinated and certain unnecessary bracketings avoided without too much divergence from the numeration in the Latin text.

Every writer of the present day who occupies himself with the History lies under a deep obligation to the scholars who have edited and commentated the text (see Introduction, p. 42). For the ever-recurrent problem of identifying places the classic work of Auguste Longnon has naturally been indispensable. There may be here and there some difference of opinion as to his decisions, but no foreign scholar can lay down the *Géographie de la France au VI^e siècle* without paying a sincere tribute to the width of his geographical knowledge and the acuteness of his critical judgment. Another debt is owed to the writers who have recorded the events and described the social conditions of the Merovingian period; the references in the notes will recall the service which they have rendered to all students. Those who seek a condensed presentation of the life and events in Merovingian France may be specially referred to Prof. C. Pfister's chapters in the *Histoire de la France illustrée* of E. Lavisse, and in Vol. II of the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*; to A. Marignan's well-documented *Études sur la Civilisation* *française* (1899); to Prof. M. Prou's brief, but systematic *La Gaule mérovingienne* (1897); to the older but valuable *Gregor von Tours und Seine Zeit*, by J. W. Loebell (1839), and to the late Sir S. Dill's posthumous book, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age*, published while the present volumes were in the press.

My special thanks are due to M. Omont for his kind permission to base the translation upon the text published by him in collaboration with M. Collon; the edition of 1913, edited by M. René Poupardin, has been used. This volume, of the same size as the translation, is convenient for reference and inexpensive; the great edition of W. Arndt in the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, on the other hand, has the disadvantages of relative costliness and weight. Finally, my gratitude is expressed to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, who have rendered possible the appearance of this book; and to Mr. J. de M. Johnson, Printer to the University, and Mr. K. Sisam, of the Clarendon Press, for the ready help and sympathy which they have given throughout in all matters connected with printing and publication.

O. M. D.

British Museum, 1927.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

INTRODUCTION

I. GREGORY AND THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

I. Gregory as Man 3
II. Gregory as Writer and Authority . . . 20
III. The MSS. and Printed Editions . . . 40
IV. The Chief Characters in the Book . . . 45
  a. Clovis and his Sons 45
  b. The Grandsons of Clovis 49
  c. The Queens and Royal Ladies . . . 67
  d. Other Personages 81
V. Abstract of Earlier Merovingian History . . 89
VI. Partitions of Gaul between the Kings . . . 136

II. THE MEROVINGIAN KINGDOMS

I. Gaul in Merovingian Times 149
  a. The Country and its Communications . . 151
  b. Settlements: Cities, Towns, Villages, &c. . 158
II. The Peoples of Gaul and their Neighbours . . 165
III. Organization of the Merovingian Kingdoms . . 191
  a. Crown, Church, and Aristocracy . . . 191
  b. Civil Administration 199
  c. Law and Justice 204
  d. Revenue and Commerce; Currency . . 218
  e. Warfare; the Army 225

III. THE MEROVINGIAN CHURCH

I. The State of Christianity 237
  a. General Survey 237
  b. Pagan Survival 245
  c. Superstition 253

II. The Organization of the Church . . . 260
- *a.* Territorial Divisions: Provinces, Dioceses, Parishes 260
- *b.* The Hierarchy and Discipline . . . 264
- *c.* Episcopal Elections and Councils . . . 288
- *d.* The Church and the Law 302
- *e.* Church Property and Revenue . . . 313

III. The Churches and their Surroundings . . . 318
- *a.* The Fabrics. Interments and Burial Grounds . 318
- *b.* Church Furniture, Services, and Choirs . . 333
- *c.* Ecclesiastical Buildings other than Churches . 343

IV. Monasticism and Asceticism 348
- *a.* Growth and Discipline of Monasteries . . 348
- *b.* Nunneries 357
- *c.* Rules 367
- *d.* Buildings 369
- *e.* Services 372
- *f.* Asceticism 374

IV. MEROVINGIAN LIFE

I. The Social Order 383
- *a.* The Free 383
- *b.* The Unfree 390
- *c.* The Family and Position of Women . . 397

II. Material Conditions: Towns and Houses . . 401

III. Knowledge and Culture 409
- *a.* Letters and Education 409
- *b.* Science: Medicine 415
- *c.* The Arts 424

IV. Pleasure and Amusements 441

MAP

The partition of Gaul after the death of Charibert . 140

ERRATA

Page 42, l. 35, *for* H. Poupardin *read* R. Poupardin
406, l. 31, *for* Metz *read* Andernach
406, l. 33, *for* Moselle *read* Rhine

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

THE TEXT

Book I. From the Creation to A.D. 397 1
II. From A.D. 397 to 511 31
III. From A.D. 511 to 547 83
IV. From A.D. 547 to 575 113
V. From A.D. 575 to 580 163
VI. From A.D. 580 to 584 229
VII. From A.D. 584 to 585 281
VIII. From A.D. 585 to 586 325
IX. From A.D. 587 to 589 367
X. From A.D. 589 to 591 423

Notes 479
Index of Proper Names 607
Index of Places and Peoples . . . 629
General Index 642
Authorities cited 657

MAP

Map of Gaul showing the principal places mentioned in the History . . . *At end*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C. M. H.	*The Cambridge Mediaeval History*, planned by J. B. Bury, edited by H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney: Vol. II (Cambridge University Press, 1913), Chapters iv and v by Prof. C. Pfister, and Chapter vi by Dr. R. Altamira.
G. M.	*Liber in gloria martyrum beatorum*; in M. G. H. (see below), *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, i, Part ii, *Miracula et opera minora*, pp. 484–561 (Hanover, 1885).
V. S. J.	*De passione et virtutibus Sancti Juliani martyris*; *ibid.*, pp. 562–84. A single Book of fifty chapters.
V. S. M.	*De virtutibus beati Martini episcopi*, in four Books; *ibid.*, pp. 584–661. (Commonly known as the *Miracula S. Martini*.)
V. P.	*Liber vitae Patrum*; *ibid.*, pp. 661–744. A single Book in twenty chapters divided into sections.
G. C.	*Liber in gloria Confessorum*; *ibid.*, pp. 744–820. A single Book in one hundred and ten short chapters or sections. All these works are edited by B. Krusch. They are called by Gregory (in the prologue to G. C.) his Eight Books of Miracles, the V. S. M. counting as four.
M. G. H.	*Monumenta Germaniae historica*, edidit Societas aperiendis fontibus rerum Germanicarum medii aevi. The well-known series of early texts, edited by various scholars.

I

GREGORY AND THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

I

GREGORY AS MAN

GREGORY of Tours tells the story of his own life; we derive from his own works the experiences of his earlier days, and the most important events in which he took part during his episcopate. These books were the principal sources used by his eleventh-century biographer, supposed to be Odo, abbot of Cluny, who, however, supplemented them by additions from Fortunatus.[1] But though Gregory's other books on the Lives of Martyrs, Fathers, and Confessors[2] yield many isolated facts of interest, the *History of the Franks* alone sets before us the man moving freely in the proper sphere of his activity; it alone reveals him as a character in the drama of his time, a living personality, with his likes and dislikes, his prejudices and superstitions, his manliness and kindliness, his honourable care for truth, his loyalty to his order and his Church. It is no deliberate self-portrait, such as artists have painted, sitting before their reflections in a glass. It is done unconsciously, stroke by stroke and point by point as we proceed with his story; in the end, we have it before us as a real, if imperfect likeness, omitting much that we could have wished to see filled in, yet by this very absence of elaboration affecting us the more certainly as a true presentation of the man.

The future bishop of Tours was not baptized under the name of Gregory. At the font he was named Georgius Florentius, after his father and one of his grandfathers.[3] He took the name of Gregory when he entered the Church, in memory of his maternal great-grandfather S. Gregory, bishop of Langres, one of the most distinguished members of his family; Tetricus, son and successor of this Gregory was his grandfather. Nicetius, bishop of Lyons (S. Nizier), was his grand-uncle; Gallus, bishop of Clermont, his uncle; Eufronius who preceded him at Tours was his cousin. Thus both on the father's and the mother's[1] side he came of families in which high ecclesiastical rank was a tradition. When he reviews the list of the bishops of Tours, from the first occupant of the see down to himself, he says with a natural pride that all but five were of his kindred.[2]

---

[1] Arndt, editor of the History in M. G. H., has not failed to note the fact that Fortunatus, friend and contemporary of Gregory, and indicated for every reason as his biographer, never undertook the task (p. 1).

[2] Gregory mentions his works in X. 31. All those which have survived are printed after the History in M. G. H., *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. i, and with one exception are edited by B. Krusch. The titles of the more important are given in full in the List of Abbreviations, the three not there included being the *De cursu stellarum* or *De cursibus ecclesiasticis*, mentioned in vol. ii, p. 604, the Miracles of S. Andrew, edited by M. Bonnet, and the Passion of the Seven Sleepers. The commentary on the Psalms (cf. X. 31) and the book on the Masses of Sidonius (cf. vol. ii, p. 604) have not come down to us.

[3] Florentius, a 'senator' of Clermont, whose father was named Georgius.

In the world, no less than in the Church, his family enjoyed a high repute. It was of the class described as 'senatorial', which meant that during the Roman supremacy in Gaul, its members had held senatorial rank;[3] it came of a Gallo-Roman line, with old aristocratic traditions, like that of Sidonius Apollinaris and of many other distinguished provincial families, members of which were naturally chosen by the people for their bishops and protectors in the early years of barbarian conquest. He tells us little of his father, Florentius; we have only such trivial details as that he was cured of a fever by the hermit abbot, Martius, and that in his later years he always bore upon his person relics which his widow, and his son after him, carried in the same manner;[4] or that he suffered from attacks of the gout. During one of these attacks we are told that a figure appeared to the child Gregory and the following dialogue took place. 'Hast thou read the book of Joshua?' 'I know nothing but my alphabet, with the learning of which I am now plagued. As to that book, I never heard of it.' The child was then ordered to cut a chip of wood, to have written upon it the name of Joshua, and then to put the chip under his father's pillow. His mother bade him obey the command; he did so, and his father was cured. When Florentius again suffered from gout, the same figure reappeared to the child, and said: 'Hast thou read the book of Tobit?' 'No.' The child was then told the story of Tobit and bidden to follow his example in the matter of the fish. His mother consented; a fish was obtained; the extracted heart and liver were placed on the fire. 'No sooner did the first savoury fumes reach the sufferer', concludes the story, 'than his swellings and pain forthwith vanished' (G. C. 39). We may assume that the household at Clermont was ordered on the large scale usual in the case of old Gallo-Roman landed families, and that a tradition of gentle manners was maintained.[1]

---

[1] His mother's name was Armentaria, granddaughter of S. Gregory, bishop of Langres (V. P. vii), her mother being that bishop's daughter. Fortunatus addresses a short poem to her (*Carm.* x. 19), comparing her, as mother of Gregory, to the mother of the Maccabees. Gundulf, an Austrasian duke, is styled *avunculus* of Armentaria (VI. *11*). He must have reached a great age.

[2] The reputation of S. Gregory of Langres stood high, not only among the Gallo-Romans but among the Franks. When Eufronius was mentioned to Lothar I as grandson of Gregory of Langres, the king replied: *Prima haec est et magna generatio* (IV. 15).

[3] The Roman municipal *curia* survived, and was known as *senatus*, but membership of a *curia* would be no distinction for such families. For senatorial families see vol. ii, p. 519.

[4] V. P. xiv. 3.

After the death of Florentius, Armentaria lived in the Burgundian kingdom,[2] where she owned property, her favourite residence being at Cavaillon. There in later years she was visited by her son, who thus had early personal associations with Burgundy.[3] She in her turn came to visit him, on one occasion after his ordination; we learn that she was then miraculously cured of an ailment which had troubled her for thirty-four years.[4] Gregory was not an only child. He had a brother Peter, who became a deacon at Langres, dying a violent death, as mentioned in the History,[5] and an unnamed sister, married to one Justinus, whose daughter Justina was prioress of the monastery at Poitiers at the time of the nuns' revolt, described in such interesting detail.[6] Of another daughter, Eustenia, married to a certain Nicetius,[1] practically all that is known is the tale that she cured a woman stricken with dumbness by application of oil from S. Martin's tomb.[2]

---

[1] Though Gregory was taken from his father's house as a young boy, the early associations connected with such a home must have remained with him through life, contributing to that confidence in intercourse with those in great place which was one of his advantages as bishop.

[2] The Merovingian kingdom of Burgundy.

[3] V. S. M. i. 16, 35; iii. 70; G. M. 84. Gregory's Burgundian connexions, ancestral and personal, may have contributed to the liking which existed between King Guntram and himself.

[4] V. S. M. iii. 10. J. W. Loebell, *Gregor von Tours und seine Zeit* (1839), p. 10, deduces from this statement that Gregory must have been born not before the year 539, and not after 543.

[5] Peter was killed by the son of one Silvester (V. 5), according to Felix, bishop of Nantes (an enemy of Gregory), because he was himself guilty of his bishop's death, an improbable charge. The only event in his life recorded by Gregory is his participation in the family pilgrimage to the tomb of S. Julian at Brioude, where he was cured of fever by drinking dust from the tomb mixed with water (V. S. J. 24).

[6] X. 15; Justina is mentioned by Gregory in his other works, and by Fortunatus (*Carm.* viii. 17, 18). The name of Justinus occurs more than once. He is cured of an illness by drinking an infusion of the herb *salvia* taken from

When Gregory was about eight years old, he was entrusted, for his upbringing to his uncle Gallus, bishop of Clermont,[3] and afterwards to Avitus, who later held the see. By Avitus he was encouraged to study sacred literature, first the Psalms, then the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles.[4] With these teachers he remained for several years, and during the time made various visits to his grand-uncle Nicetius, a prelate himself much concerned with education, and founder of a cathedral-school, in which boys were sufficiently trained in letters and in the Psalms eventually to become members of the choir.[5] Nicetius was a masterful personality, and Gregory, who during the later visits was already a deacon, must have learned something as to the practical side of episcopal life from these sojourns. He was a privileged person in the house,[6] his place at meals being by the bishop's side.[7] Fortunatus, in a poem congratulating the citizens of Tours on obtaining Gregory as their bishop, alludes to him as an *alumnus* of S. Julian, which saint had sent to S. Martin one who was dear to himself. The words mark the peculiar devotion to that saint of the great Auvergnat who had been secured for Tours.[8]

---

the floor of the crypt of SS. Ferreolus and Ferrucius (G. M. 70). He redeems a crippled slave who had been healed at the tomb of S. Martin (V. S. M. i. 40). He is cured of another illness by the agency of a candle from S. Martin's tomb, sent to him by Gregory; it is lit before him, while he drinks a decoction of the wick in water (*ibid.*, ii. 2).

[1] *Nicetius, vir neptis meae* (V. 14).

[2] V. S. M. v. 36. She had first driven away some quacks, or medicine-men, who had attached *ligamina*. For Eustenia, cf. also G. M. 70.

[3] This may be inferred from his own statement that he first learned his letters at the age of eight. The music in the cathedral in the time of Gallus was good, and the *cantor*, though a fatuous man, was accomplished (V. P. vi). For church music cf. p. 342, below.

[4] V. P. ii. 1: *Studium ad ecclesiastica sollicitavit scripta . . . evangelicae praedicationis dicta atque apostolicae virtutis historias epistolasque perduxit.*

[5] V. P. viii. 2, 3; G. C. 62; V. S. J. 2. For mention of choir-boys in the services of the Gallican Church cf. p. 336.

[6] i. e. the 'church house' or residence adjoining the cathedral in which the bishop lived in the company of clerics (cf. p. 343).

[7] V. P. viii. 4. Nicetius lived until 573, approximately the time when Gregory, in his turn, became a bishop.

[8] *Carm.* v. 3. S. Julian was the great popular saint of Auvergne, and Gregory had always a special devotion to him, as his work on the miracles of Julian (V. S. J.) testifies; see especially ch. 50. Pilgrimages to this saint's shrine were frequent in the time of Sidonius (*Letters*, iv. 6).

The first books with which he was acquainted were probably, as we have seen, the Psalms, and books of the New Testament. His first 'school-books' may have included the *Formulae Arvernenses*, some fragments of which have come down to us,[1] but the Bible and extracts from Lives of ascetic saints were probably the most important; a little Virgil may have been added. At a more advanced stage he made further progress with Virgil, gaining a knowledge of the earlier books, but especially of Book I; he also read the opening chapters of Sallust's *Catilina*. Several quotations from the *Aeneid* occur in the History,[2] while many phrases and expressions are clearly inspired by Virgilian reminiscence;[3] Sallust is quoted twice.[4] But, as Bonnet justly remarks, we cannot argue from these slight points of contact to any decisive influence exerted by the classics on Gregory's general culture. It is probable that the boy had no first-hand acquaintance with Pliny, Aulus Gellius, or Cicero.[5] Nothing is said of anything in the nature of scientific instruction, unless it be some smattering of astronomy.[6]

There are various indications in Gregory's writings that he was not physically robust. He was a frequent victim of fever in his adult life. While Eufronius was still bishop, Gregory, suffering from a purulent fever, insisted on being taken to the tomb of S. Martin at Tours, where, after a vigil, he recovered strength and appetite (V. S. M. 32, 33); he further suffered from stomachic troubles. Two months before being made bishop, he was seriously ill; after a sarcastic interview with his doctor, to whom he set forth the complete failure of his prescription, he resorted to unscientific methods. He had, indeed, but a poor opinion of doctors, while his faith in the miraculous cures wrought by S. Martin steadily increased. The remedy for most complaints was the above-described *potio de pulvere sepulchri*, which, in his judgement, far excelled all the subtleties of the medical men (*medicorum argutiae*).[1] In the present case he drank that from S. Martin's tomb, and soon reported himself cured (V. S. M. ii. 1). After a recurrence of this malady, he found relief by rubbing the abdomen with the end of a hanging or cloth (*velum*) at the tomb (V. S. M. ii. 60; iv. 1). From his similar action whenever attacked by illness it is easy to infer that he shared throughout his life the general belief of his day in the prophylactic energy of relics and of any substance brought into contact with the tomb of a saint (cf. p. 256). There are no bounds to his faith in the power of such agency in general, and of that exerted through the power of S. Martin in particular.[2]

---

[1] M. Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grég. de Tours*, p. 49. They are hardly educational.

[2] II. 29 = *Aen.* i. 46; IV. 30 = *Aen.* i. 100, 101, 108; IV. 46 = *Aen.* iii. 56 (cf. also VI. 36; VIII. 22; V. S. M. i. 31). For quotations in his other works see Bonnet, as above, p. 50. For his classical allusions and quotations generally see G. Kurth, 'S^t^. Grég. de Tours et les études classiques au VI^e^ siècle' in *Rev. des questions hist.*, 1878.

[3] II. 27 (*servans sub pectore vulnus*); V. 20 (*somno vinoque sepulti*); VII. 6. A long list of such phrases in Gregory's other works is given by Bonnet.

[4] IV. 8 (13); VII. 1.

[5] Bonnet, p. 53.

[6] Such as we infer from the *De cursu stellarum* (cf. vol. ii, p. 604).

With such a descent and upbringing, Gregory might almost be described as born to become a bishop. He himself seems to have accepted without question a prearranged scheme of existence.[3] But this is no proof of indolence or lack of ambition, for the episcopal career at this time was richer in opportunity for action than any other. The bishop, from the permanence of his office, its relative freedom from royal interference, and his wide powers, civil and religious, was really a more important person in his district than any of the king's officers, who were removed at the royal caprice, whereas a bishop could only lose his see through the decision of an episcopal council. He could thus speak to the king with a frankness which the most highly-placed laymen dared not use, and, if a good man, could exert his authority for the protection of the people in his diocese.[1] Even in this time of decadence, when so many sees were held by bad men, the influence of the bishops was the greatest power for good in Gaul. We are told little or nothing of his life between his entry into the priesthood and the time when, at the age of thirty-three, he became bishop. His advantages being what they were, his consecration might have been expected even earlier; perhaps he desired no other bishopric than that of Tours, in many ways the most important in Gaul, and in a peculiar way a family see. He may, therefore, have tranquilly awaited the succession to his relative Eufronius, not unprepared to take all reasonable measures for securing his position when the time came, but not intriguing against any man. The news of his selection by the clergy and people of Tours found him at the court of Sigibert, to whose dominions the city belonged; he was, therefore, in the right place to learn at once in whose favour the royal diploma would be issued, and was doubtless in so far a *persona grata* as to feel small anxiety as to the result. This is not to say that he was a place-hunter. He may have wished to be appointed; but he must have been assured that the people of Tours, to whom he was known through his visits and his relationship to Bishop Eufronius, desired the same thing. Gregory had no false modesty; his whole career shows him to have been an outspoken man. If he believed himself the right person to occupy the see of Tours, events were soon to justify the belief.[2]

---

[1] V. S. M. iv. 60. On the occasion which gave rise to this utterance, he asserted that the tomb-dust dispelled a toothache which the doctors had failed to cure (cf. *ibid.*, i. 12, 27, 28).

Odo, abbot of Cluny, in his 'Life', professed to know that Gregory was a weakly and insignificant-looking man, and after his death such a tradition appears to have existed. Odo tells a story which amplifies the statement, unconfirmed by evidence, that the bishop of Tours visited Gregory the Great at Rome. Making his obeisance before the Pope, he read in the latter's expression his secret surprise that so great a personality as that of his visitor should be housed in so puny a frame. Thereupon he rose with dignity, and said: 'It is God who hath made us, and not we ourselves.'

[2] One or two more instances of such action, recorded by himself, may be cited. He avers that by rubbing his throat with an end of the *velum* at S. Martin's tomb he rid himself of a swallowed fish-bone: *quid tamen aculeus malus devenit nescio. Non enim rejeci . . . non discessisse sensi in alveum* (V. S. M. i. 3). Troubled with a swollen tongue, he licks the rail before the tomb, and is cured (*ibid.*, iv. 2). When travelling, he meets a heavy thunderstorm. By virtue of the above-mentioned relics which had been worn before him by his father and mother, the storm divides before him, and he goes dry (G. M. 83). He brings away candles from the tomb of S. Martin; wax from these, when placed in vineyards exposed to hail, prevents all damage from this source (V. S. M. i. 32). For further examples of such superstitions cf. pp. 254–7, below.

[3] He gives as the immediate cause of his entry into the Church a vow made during an attack of fever at the tomb of S. Illidius (S. Allyre: V. P. ii. 2). This may have been the immediate cause; it can hardly have been the primary one.

The year of his consecration was 573,[3] and he might well have looked forward to a tenure as tranquil as that of any office in Merovingian France could be. His patron Sigibert was in some ways the most satisfactory of the four sons of Lothar I, a steady man in the prime of life, a capable soldier, and married to a princess, Brunhild, who was the ablest woman of her time. But in a year or two the whole prospect was changed. In the very hour of triumph over his incorrigible brother Chilperic, Sigibert was murdered, as it was thought by the emissaries of Queen Fredegund (p. 115). Chilperic at once usurped Touraine, and Gregory suddenly had for master the worst king in Gaul. This relation was to last for eleven years ; it was only ended when, in 585, the hour came for Chilperic to fall in his turn by the assassin's hand. Throughout the whole of this period the bishop of Tours was harassed by the effects of royal misgovernment. Outside his city was the church of S. Martin, the most famous sanctuary in the land, which in consequence was chosen as a refuge by Chilperic's unruly son, Merovech, and by some of the most turbulent men in the three kingdoms. Protecting Merovech from seizure, the bishop incurred the dangerous hatred of the queen, who desired above all things her stepson's death ; in short, he became involved in the enmities of a Merovingian court. The strength of his character emerged in these years of trial, when he stood fast against both king and queen, determined to maintain the rights of the Church and his own dignity both as man and bishop. The case of Praetextatus, bishop of Rouen, shows the determination of his character. This prelate was marked down by the queen as a victim because he had dared to marry her stepson to her political rival, the widowed Brunhild. He was brought before a council of bishops at Paris (V. 12 (18)), the members of which were expected to be no less subservient to Chilperic than was that king himself to Fredegund. The king practically played the part of counsel for the prosecution, and both bribery and undue influence were employed to secure a condemnation. Gregory resisted Chilperic at every point and, had not Praetextatus suffered himself to be overawed, might well have obtained his complete acquittal. The picturesque scene in which Chilperic sought to win over Gregory during the course of the trial by those blandishments in which he was so well skilled is singularly vivid and dramatic. He sent for the bishop, who was conducted into a garden, where Chilperic was discovered by an arbour between two bishops, both hostile to Gregory, Bertram of Bordeaux, and Ragnemod of Paris ; near them was a bench, or low table, with refreshments. 'Bishop,' said the king, ' thy duty is to do justice to all, and lo ! I have none from thee ; but plainly do I see that thou consentest to iniquity, and that in thee is fulfilled the proverb : crow picketh not out crow's eye.' ' O king,' answered the bishop of Tours, ' if any among the rest of us goeth aside from the path of justice, thou art there to correct him. But if thou goest aside, who shall censure thee ? ' Chilperic then threatened to assemble the people,[1] accuse Gregory of injustice to his liege lord, and point out to them that if the king received no justice, what should befall the plain man ? Gregory refused to be browbeaten, in his turn threatening the king with God's judgement. Chilperic now resorted to cajolery. ' This dish I have had prepared for thee ; a little fowl with peas only.' Gregory was not to be turned from his point : ' Man's food is to do the will of God, not to indulge himself with delicacies. Let the king, who accuseth others, himself promise to abide by the law and the canons.' Chilperic, ready with an oath of double application, extended his right hand and swore by Almighty God on no account to infringe the law and the canons. Then, and not till then, did Gregory accept from him wine and bread before taking his departure. The king having failed to move the resolute bishop, the queen in her turn made the attempt after her fashion. That night there was a loud knocking at the door of Gregory's lodging. Messengers from the queen made their appearance. If Gregory would abandon his opposition, he should have two hundred pounds of silver : ' Every other bishop has given his promise ', urged the messengers. ' If ye gave me a thousand pounds weight of gold and silver, what could I do but obey the Lord's Command ? One promise only will I make, that if the rest obey the canons, in so far will I follow them.' In the morning a deputation of uneasy and vacillating bishops received a similar answer ; the rest of the story may be read in the text. The episode illustrates Gregory's sturdy character. It is true that a bishop could with impunity dare more than a layman ; a layman might perhaps have hesitated to take the offered refreshment. Yet in the end Praetextatus was assassinated in his own cathedral during divine service by a satellite of the very queen who sought to bribe Gregory (VIII. 31).

---

[1] Cf. p. 266, below.

[2] The view has been expressed that Gregory really wished to avoid election and only yielded at last to royal pressure, but his active nature and his interest in public affairs seem to render this improbable.

[3] He was consecrated by that ambiguous character Egidius, bishop of Reims, for whom in after years he can hardly have felt much respect.

---

[1] Chilperic, like Fredegund after him, always retained a large measure of popular support, because in his kingdom the Merovingian royal line was loyally regarded.

In all his writings Gregory is sparing of intimate details; we learn nothing from him as to his own appearance; his references to his parents and relations lack personal quality; he does not make his father or his mother, his brother or his sister at all real to us; they remain little more than names. Nor does he describe his home at Clermont, or his mother's house at Cavaillon. When he was consecrated he ceased to have a private life, for the good bishop might have none. He lived in the 'church house', or residence adjoining his cathedral church, surrounded by priests; he enjoyed little privacy.[1]

After Chilperic's death life became easier for the bishop of Tours. Though the usurpation of Guntram prevented him for a series of years from living under the rule of his right master, Childebert II, he had in Guntram a king of genial character and devoted to the Church. In his own province, too, even before Chilperic's tragic end, a source of discord had been removed by the death of one of his suffragans with whom his relations had never been harmonious. This was Felix, bishop of Nantes, between whom and his metropolitan there had been serious friction. Gregory charges him with boundless vainglory and covetousness,[2] while Felix had gone so far as to accuse Gregory's brother Peter of murdering his bishop, Tetricus of Langres; on another occasion he had connived at the escape of Riculf, who had gravely wronged the bishop of Tours. Acrimonious correspondence had passed between Gregory and the bishop of Nantes, and the death of Felix in 582 put an end to a state of acute tension.[3] The relations of Gregory and Felix throw an interesting light upon the difficulties to which a metropolitan was subjected in Merovingian Gaul. The pope having no effective authority in the country, the metropolitan could expect no help from any individual of higher authority than his own; provincial bishops had a freedom which they were able and often ready to abuse. Gregory had little reason to complain during the years when Tours obeyed the king of Burgundy. He was upon a footing of familiarity with Guntram, sitting at his table and once receiving a morning call from him in his lodging at Orleans; his advice was often asked and taken. But probably the bishop was glad when by the Treaty of Andelot his diocese returned to the Austrasian house to which he had always remained loyal in his heart. Sigibert indeed was dead, but Brunhild lived, giving proof of that political ability which ranks her among the notable queen-mothers of history; the young king, Childebert II, was well disposed to the Church. But this time of reunion was all too short. Gregory died soon after King Guntram in the year 594, aged not more than fifty-five, having held the see of Tours for twenty-one years.[1] He and Guntram, neither of whom approached three score years and ten, were long lived, as the life of great personages went in that violent and insanitary age. Both of the friends were afterwards canonized.

---

[1] From IX. 6 we seem to infer that he had also regular quarters at the Church of S. Martin, perhaps connected with the monastery there; allusion is made to 'my cell' (*cellula nostra*), and to an oratory opening out of it. This would seem to follow, unless on the occasion mentioned in the above chapter, he returned within the city the same evening.

[2] *Immensae enim erat cupiditatis et iactantiae* (V. 5).

[3] In one of his letters to Felix, Gregory attempted to use the weapon of sarcasm, and seems to have regarded his use of it with some satisfaction, though the humour falls flatly upon our ears (V. 5). Fortunatus gives Felix a much better character than that suggested by the bishop of Tours, and incompatibility of temper between Gregory and the bishop of Nantes evidently exaggerated their disagreements.

Gregory is not to be classed among the most unworldly of the saints, but he was a leader among those who fight the battle day by day in the world, and are venerated for their championship of good rather than for spiritual unction. He was a practical man, seeking to make the best of a bad world, rather than an idealist hoping for heavenly conditions upon earth. We gather from the History and his other works that he was not inclined to a severe asceticism, but that, like Guntram, he liked cheerful company and the pleasure of social intercourse; we have seen that he was brought up in affluence and accustomed to the comforts of life. The fevers and other physical affections of his earlier life probably warned him against exposing his constitution to excessive strain. In his younger years, at any rate, he did not abstain from wine, as we infer from his account of his visit to Tours to be cured of fever in the time of Bishop Eufronius; he specially notes that when his appetite returned after the long interruption of his illness he could once more enjoy his wine (*vinum delectatus sum bibere*).[1] He also took pleasure in the fruits of the earth, and liked others to do the same. His attitude towards extreme austerity is illustrated by the course which he took with regard to a well-known hermit, soon after he came to Tours as bishop. On that occasion the eremite abbot Senoch issued from his retirement to pay him a visit. The renown of this man's saintliness having somewhat turned his head, Gregory was obliged to rebuke him, bidding him mitigate his severe practices, and ordaining him priest. Senoch was not stiff-necked, and adopted his advice.[2]

---

[1] Some authorities (as Pagi, and the Benedictine *Hist. littéraire de la France*) give the date as 595.

Gregory's was a human personality; though his life was much taken up with affairs, he was capable of deep feeling. When he relates the death of the children who died of the great epidemic of dysentery (V. 26 (34)) he does not seek to conceal his emotion. 'Then did we lose the sweet and beloved little children, whom we cherished in our bosoms, or nursed in our arms.' The passage ends with the words of Job: *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name for evermore.*[3] He had the testimony of the children themselves; they were clearly not afraid of him.[4] He could feel interest in the affairs and pursuits of ordinary men; he liked to talk with them and to hear their tales. So we find him listening to a fisherman's experience at Baugy (Seine-et-Loire), when a very big fish collided with his boat, but, as a result of prayer to Martin, was caught and exchanged for a *modius* of wine.[5] He was mercifully inclined. Some thieves had committed the worst of offences from his point of view; they had robbed the tomb of S. Martin. They were sent in chains to Chilperic, who had commanded their presence. Gregory, remembering the mercy of S. Martin towards criminals, begged the king to spare their lives, since those to whom the right of prosecution belonged abstained from bringing any charge. It was the powerful criminals, the great wild beasts of the Merovingian jungle, that he found it least possible to forgive; and when such a savage creature as Count Leudast meets a terrible end he says frankly that he deserved his fate.[1] We learn little or nothing of his friendships. His relations with Fortunatus were perhaps those of cordial rather than of deep friendship. Gregory himself only speaks once or twice of him, calling him 'Fortunatus the priest', or 'the Italian priest'. We have to consult the works of Fortunatus himself to discover that very kindly relations existed between the two men (cf. p. 83).

---

[1] V. S. M. i. 33.

[2] V. P. xv. He became, however, very arrogant (*cothornosus*), journeying to Poitou to boast of his power to his relatives. By birth he belonged to the tribe of the Theifali (p. 172).

[3] Job i. 21.

[4] Cf. the episode in V. S. M. v. 17, 18. Here children, believing that their prayer to S. Martin had removed from their eyes the dust that spoiled their games, ran to him as he came out of church to tell him the good news.

[5] V. S. M. ii. 16.

If Gregory says little about his personal attachments, he is no more communicative about his official or daily avocations. We hear little about the management of the diocese; nothing about visitations or personal contact with the country clergy;[2] nothing, for instance, of difficulties with his archdeacon. There are many scenes from clerical life in the History, but in few of them is the narrator himself an actor. A bishop was a judge, holding his own court, which had an authority in theory equal to that of the count's court, and in practice greater. But Gregory gives us no personal reminiscences of his experience on the bench. We only learn from him a fact or two as to his relations with the secular judges, the counts and their subordinates, with whom a bishop was always liable to come into conflict. He seems to have avoided altercation whenever possible, and yet to have asserted his position with no small success.[3] Sometimes, as in the case of a violent feud at Tours, he joined the count in his efforts to effect a settlement (VII. 47). He dealt firmly with the disloyal priest Riculf. As bishop of Tours, he had a great advantage over hostile or wicked counts through the wholesome fear entertained for the *virtus*, or miraculous power of S. Martin. In his insistence upon the right of sanctuary and upon setting the captive free Gregory was following a universal practice of the Gallican bishops. Both of these claims were liable to bring him into conflict with the secular power, but he never avoided the issue. In his zeal for the liberation of prisoners he was inspired by the example of his great-uncle Nicetius, bishop of Lyons. This bishop was celebrated for the number whom his influence saved from the arm of the law either during his lifetime or after it. Gregory was once standing by when the bishop of Autun told King Guntram of an apparition of S. Nicetius in seven cities on a single night, effecting a jail-delivery in each, while the representatives of the law dared take no further steps against these liberated men (*sed nec iudices contra eos quicquam agere deinceps ausi sunt*: V. P. viii. 10). Guntram appears to have received the story without protest, and Gregory applauded it.

---

[1] Cf. VI. 23 (32): *Sicque perfidam agens vitam iusta morte finivit* (of Leudast).

[2] Though Gregory was not an absentee-bishop, it is clear that his duties of attending on the kings and taking part in episcopal councils compelled him to be frequently out of his diocese.

[3] Cf. V. S. M. v. 35.

The politics of Gregory's time were already influenced by the opposition between the Crown and the aristocracy (pp. 192 ff.). The active churchman had to decide which party was more favourable to the Church, being convinced that the influence of the Church was the sole power exerted in the interest of good. It was not difficult for Gregory to learn from his own experience that the one practical thing to be done was to ally the Crown with the Church. The aristocracy in all the Merovingian kingdoms was turbulent and self-seeking, intent on the indulgence of its exorbitant desires. Though there were a few godfearing men in high place, like Gogo (p. 88) and Chrodin, the majority were brutal and violent without faith or public spirit; the Franks taught the Gallo-Romans brutality, and in return received from them lessons in corruption and intrigue. Among the dukes and counts with whom the bishop of Tours came in contact there were probably three ruffians for one honest man. The acts of Guntram Boso, Rauching, Ursio, and others, as set forth in the History, suffice to explain why the party of which they were the pillars could never commend itself to a good bishop. It was, therefore, necessary to support the kings, who at least preserved some sort of public order, but to tell them the truth without fear, and denounce them when they did evil, as the prophets of old denounced the kings of Israel. Gregory dealt on these lines with his successive royal masters and their consorts. He boldly confronted the graceless Chilperic; as boldly he resisted the schemes of Fredegund, his queen and evil genius. With Guntram, the weak but well-disposed, remonstrance generally sufficed; over the young Childebert II he doubtless exerted his moral authority with the support of the queen-mother Brunhild. The prologue to Book V is a grave and dignified arraignment of the Merovingian kings who have heaped up riches, whose storehouses are full of corn, wine, and oil, whose treasure-chambers are heaped with gold and silver. 'One thing ye lack; having not the grace of God, ye have not peace. Why lust ye after one another's goods? . . . Search diligently the writings of the men of old; then shall ye discern what cometh of civil wars.'

Gregory was a constant traveller in Gaul though chiefly in the centre, east, and north of the country. He was familiar with the Austrasian side, towards the Rhine and Germany; with Paris and other parts of Neustria; with his ancestral Burgundy and his native Auvergne; with Poitou, and naturally with Touraine. The south he seems to have known less well: there is not much evidence that he was acquainted with the Rhône valley; Septimania (p. 145) was in Visigothic hands; his ways do not seem to have led him to Bordeaux or beyond. Into Brittany, then as at most periods of later history a province apart, he did not penetrate.

Outside Gaul he never appears to have travelled; it has been stated that he visited Rome, but there is no evidence for this. He was fairly well informed about Italian affairs, for clerics and other persons, some from his own diocese, often brought him news from Rome. He heard something of the Lombards through their wars with the Franks. Of Visigothic Spain he learned from Queen Brunhild, and from envoys passing through Tours, though in two such cases he must have devoted almost all his time to disputes on the Arian heresy (vol. ii, pp. 214, 271). From Constantinople some authentic news came through the various Frankish embassies, which in the same way brought stories of Carthage, at this time under Byzantine control; but the fables which he repeats about the Emperor Tiberius show that he had little real knowledge of Byzantine history. He knew something by hearsay of Egypt and Syria through the stories related by ascetics or exiles from the Christian East who had made their way to Gaul. From such sources he learned of the Persian invasions of Byzantine provinces. Of the British Isles he knows no more than he does of Persia. England is only mentioned twice as the country in which King Charibert's daughter was living as spouse to an unnamed prince in Kent. His silence makes us realize how completely the Saxon invasion of our island had cut it off from the old intercourse with the country across the Channel. The pagan tide had submerged all those Christian parts of Britain which formerly came into close contact with Gaul, except the south-west, from which immigrants had poured into Brittany (p. 174); but these immigrants were Celts, who remained in Breton territory, having little part or lot in Merovingian life. England might almost have been non-existent for all that Gregory has to say; Scotland and Ireland are unmentioned, though in Gregory's latter years the great missionary Columban had already entered Gaul, and received a welcome from the sovereigns at whose courts the bishop of Tours was so familiar a figure.

We cannot leave unnoticed the simple credulity of Gregory. Where the saints were in question, it was fathomless; and a man who in dealing with affairs often reveals the possession of a judicious mind, is yet eager at every turn to disconnect effects from their natural causes that they may be placed to the credit of the saintly *virtus*.[1] Diseases, accidents, lesser visitations must all be thus accredited; and though we recognize the moral purpose prompting the action, we must admit that he attributes to supernatural power a persistence of intervention in trivial no less than in great affairs which the most ardent advocates of miracle in our own times would find superfluous. But in the sixth century science had few followers (p. 414), and men are of the ages in which they live. The other and greater Gregory whose life fell within this period, greater alike in administration, and in constructive thought, shared to the full the belief that natural law is interrupted by supernatural power upon very trifling issues.

In leaving the subject we may admire the tact with which it is dismissed by Ruinart, the great editor of Gregory's works in the seventeenth century.[1] After defending his author to a certain point, he thus continues : *Etsi nolim inficiari Gregorium forte in credendis miraculis fuisse faciliorem.* We may agree with that excellent scholar not only in this, but in his affirmation that the bishop of Tours was one who with a sincere heart set forth in direct language what he believed to be the truth.

---

[1] Gregory also shared the common belief in a connexion between signs and wonders in the heavens and a divine displeasure with mankind resulting in pestilence or death. But such belief has at all times been so widely held that it is unnecessary to insist upon it in the present place. It is illustrated in many passages of the History.

---

[1] *Praefatio* to his edition, § 64. In the ninth century Hilduin had called Gregory a man 'of wondrous simplicity' (*mirae simplicitatis*), an expression to which the erudite Sirmond afterwards took exception. For the sincerity of Gregory, see also H. Delehaye, *Les recueils antiques des miracles des saints*, in Analecta Bolland. XLIII, pp. 92 ff.

II

GREGORY AS WRITER AND AUTHORITY

THE prologue to the *In gloria Confessorum* contains a confession of literary deficiencies frank enough to disarm the most censorious. Gregory there admits that he confuses his genders and is helpless with the cases of his prepositions. He uses the ablative for the accusative, and the accusative for ablative. ‘Can the stolid ox’, he asks, ‘practise the games of the palaestra, or the slow ass dart here and there amid the ranks of the ball-players?’[1] In other writings Gregory apologizes in a similar vein for the roughness and uncouth simplicity of his style.[2] He is always regretting the absence of a literary culture such as that possessed by his friend Fortunatus, and bemoaning the *rusticitas* of his own work. When about to begin his Life of S. Martin, he unburdened himself to his mother, lamenting his literary shortcomings.[3] Armentaria, like a sensible woman,

---

[1] *Quia sum sine litteris rhethoricis et arte grammatica dicaturque mihi a litteratus , O rustice et idiota quid nomen tuum inter scriptores indi aestimas? . . . Putasne . . . ut bos piger palaestrae ludum exerceat, aut asinus segnis inter sphaeristarum ordinem celeri volatu discurrat?* The allusion is to the elaborate ball-games played in Gaul at an earlier period, but perhaps surviving here and there, even in Merovingian times. It is amusing to find Gregory thus excusing his defects in the very diction of Sidonius. In this Prologue Gregory suggests that the History might be versified. *Quod nos inculte et breviter stilo nigrante discribimus, vos lucide ac splendide distento* (?) *versu in paginis prolixioribus dilatetis.* Cf. H. F. x. 31 n., where he repeats the suggestion. Posterity has been spared these ‘more prolix pages’; we may guess what they might have been by reading the metrical Life of S. Martin by Fortunatus.

[2] V. P. ii, in prefatory remarks to his short account of S. Illidius: *Veniam peto legentibus. Non enim me artis grammaticae studium imbuit, neque auctorum saecularium polita lectio erudivit. . . . Qua de re crudae rusticitatis temeritatem ostendens quae de beato cognovi Illidio illo quo possum proferam stilo.* Yet, in a page or so, he expresses the fact that the cock crew in the words: *cumque plausum ales ille lucis nuntius repercussis alis altius protulisset.*

[3] V. S. M. Introduction: *Non tibi latet quod sim inops litteris . . . stultus et idiota. Utinam Severus* (i. e. Sulpicius Severus) *aut Paulinus viverent, aut certe Fortunatus adesset. . . . Sed quid timeo rusticitatem meam, cum Dominus Redemptor et Deus noster ad distruendam mundanae sapientiae vanitatem non oratores, sed piscatores, nec philosophos sed rusticos praeeligit.*

In his Life of S. Martin he says: *apud Dei maiestatem magis simplicitas pura quam philosophorum valet argutia* (II. 1).

Gregory’s confessions of ‘rusticity’ must be taken literally; they are no utterances of the vanity which expects a compliment. A study of the manu-pointed out that if he wrote in the language of every day he would be understood by everybody, whereas, if he imitated the late-Roman stylists, his words would penetrate few minds. In the end he took heart of grace, and decided to make the venture, consoled by the reflection that when Christ determined to confound the vanities of worldly knowledge, he chose as his agents neither philosophers nor orators, but plain fishermen and peasants. Yet he is always regretting the forbidden fruit, and envying the unenviable Fortunatus. When we mark the effect of his occasional relapses towards fine writing, as understood at Ravenna; when we find him dragging in poetical expressions, quoting Virgil, or indulging in abstract terms and ill-chosen metaphors, we could almost wish that the disciple of a lost literary cause had never become his friend. The attempts at style are more frequent in the History than in his other works because it is his *magnum opus*, and he is conscious of the fact.[1] The sole result upon the modern reader is a sense of irritation; not only are the stylish passages out of harmony with the general plainness, but their introduction tends to obscure the meaning and increase the number of difficult places. Fortunately they are few in comparison; the mass of the work is really straightforward, as are Gregory's other books on the miracles of the saints and martyrs, or his Lives of the Fathers which have something of the childlike simplicity characterizing the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.[2] It is pleasant to know that Gregory had a real interest in the maintenance of letters in Gaul, and that he was always urging Fortunatus to write, even suggesting subjects to him. One of these, a poem on the conversion *en masse* of five hundred Jews at Clermont by bishop Avitus of Clermont, has come down to us (Fort. *Carm.* v. 5), like a sapphic ode, which also owed its

---

scripts is enough to prove his sincerity. Cf. G. Monod, *Études critiques*, pp. 111, 114; Loebell, *Gregor von Tours und seine Zeit*, pp. 308 ff.; Ampère, *Hist. litt. de France*, ii. 287, 309; Giesebrecht, Introduction to his edition of the History, p. xvi.

[1] Cf. I. 17. We have seen that it is in the prologues or prefaces to his various works that Gregory harps most loudly on his *rusticitas*. His pleasure in producing his few classical quotations becomes almost pathetic. The *auri sacra fames* is dragged in wherever possible. The early books of the *Aeneid* are his chief source, and where he does not quote a whole line he often introduces a Virgilian phrase. For Gregory and the classics, cf. G. Kurth, *Études franques* (1917), Étude I.

[2] They lack the spiritual quality of the Little Flowers of S. Francis.

inspiration to the bishop of Tours (*Carm.* ix. 6, 9). But we may well be thankful that Poitiers was reasonably far away, and that Fortunatus was not a neighbour, always looking in to criticize and influence his friend's writing.[1]

Thus Gregory's attitude towards the authorities and the literary canons of the Schools is exactly opposed to that of his contemporary, Gregory the Great, who professed disdain for both rhetor and grammarian: *indignum vehementer existimo ut verba caelestis oraculi restringam sub regulis Donati.*[2] In the sentences preceding these words the Pope declares that he has not condescended to observe the rules of art, does not trouble to avoid barbarisms, and despises the correct use of prepositions. Again, in the Prologue to the Second of his *Dialogues*, he speaks with admiration of S. Benedict, who left Rome and its learning: *scienter nescius et sapienter indoctus.*

Though Gregory's sentences are rough, his words are deliberately composed; he so places the word which he intends to carry emphasis that it attracts the reader's attention. He had not the art of constructing periods, but worked out a style of expression for himself. His diction is less penetrated by barbaric expressions than we might have expected; it is purer than that of contemporary authors.[3] His vocabulary retains most of the old words, even though some are used with fresh meanings; the new coinage of medieval Latin is not yet freely minted. The barbarism lies in his spelling, his grammar, and his syntax, which constantly diverge from the usage of classical times.[1] His capacity for the ungrammatical cannot be judged from such emended texts as that of Ruinart; it is necessary to read those literally transcribed from the manuscript. We cannot lay the blame for all this boyish incorrectitude upon the ignorance of copyists. As Bonnet has remarked, when we find these elementary blunders confirmed by the close agreement of several manuscripts almost contemporary with Gregory, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that they occurred in the archetype corrected by him.[2]

---

[1] The verse of Fortunatus makes but a slight appeal to the modern reader, with the exception of his famous hymns and a few poems in which he shows real feeling, such as that on the unhappy princess Galswinth. It is too thickset with commonplaces and well-worn similes to be difficult, it is merely dull. His prose, on the other hand, though generally clear, is here and there troubled with inversions, full of antitheses and elaborate periods recalling those of Sidonius. Fortunatus in two poems calls Gregory *florens in studiis*, and *facundus* (*Carm.* v. 15; viii. 26); but he may be suspected of a generous bias in favour of his friend.

[2] *Commentary on Job*; cf. also *Ep.* v. 53 a. Quoted by Plummer (*Baedae opera hist.*, Introduction, p. liii), where he is remarking on the limpidity and ease of Bede's style. Bede considered Grammar as an acquirement to be respected as the proof of thorough training. In his natural acceptance of its rules he stands between our Gregory, who is too obsequious, and his namesake, whose antipathy is too intense. But, like Bede, the great Pope attains a directness and simplicity of expression free alike from the frequent barbarism of Gregory of Tours, and from the pedantry of a Cassiodorus or a Fortunatus.

[3] Gregory was really an 'autodidact' who sins by ignorance: *c'est l'ancienne langue, qu'on parle incorrectement; ce n'est pas une langue nouvelle qu'on crée* (Max Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours*, p. 7). For the question of Gregory's latinity, the student is referred to the excellent book of M. Bonnet. The aim of the present translation being historical and not philological, it is not necessary to devote space to those linguistic questions with which M. Bonnet deals at adequate length.

An obvious but useful simile compares the periods in the political development of nations to the successive parts of the day; and it has often been observed that their literature in like manner reflects the stages of growth, of full development, and of final decay. The hours of dawn are represented by the work of writers artless, yet direct and vigorous, whose eyes are fixed upon the future; such were an Ennius and a Varro. The shadowless noon brings the accomplished and lucid classics: Virgil, Catullus, Horace, Caesar, Sallust. To the long-drawn afternoon of the silver age belong the representatives of increasing decline, a Statius, a Prudentius, an Ausonius, and even of a Sidonius; they pass out of view in the glow of a garish sunset. Then come the authors of the twilight, condemned to retreat, with many a backward glance, before the invasion of night. They are forced to leave the old models behind, and in the increasing gloom find no new ones; in the confusion and haste they must help themselves out as best they may with that plain colloquial language which never claimed the style of literature. Such an author of the twilight is Gregory of Tours; his work looks both forward and backward; forward into barbarism, backward towards the brilliance of a day almost forgotten. Yet despite its blunt and uncouth air we find ourselves comparing it, not to its disadvantage, with the effete and turgid production of the latest afternoon. We may dislike certain startling lapses and crudities of the diction, but these are more than compensated by the gain in natural force, in vitality, in the power of reflecting points in real life, and reaching the quick of an event.[1] The old fripperies of commonplace, the redundancies, the conventions of a purely bookish culture are swept away as it were with a rough besom of twigs. We do not care how the thing is done ; we are merely content that done it is. Of one thing the experience has made us sure : better barbarism than platitude [2] or useless riddling over trifles. We see how true it is that at certain periods ‘ education kills literature ’.[3] We had rather that our author should be *inops litteris*,[4] than that, like Fortunatus, on his more complacent side, he should persist in cultivating out of due time a virtuosity which had earned the right to be forgotten.

---

[1] Bonnet, p. 752.

[2] As above, p. 86. Bonnet reminds us that things became even worse in the seventh century, and that when after reading the writers of that time we come back to Gregory, the difference is as great as if after reading him we returned to Sallust or Caesar. The barbarism of ‘Virgilius Maro’, for example, reaches an incredible depth.

But it must be admitted that Gregory fails in certain deeper powers : that of sensitive appreciation, that of imaginative insight, that of wide survey, which can enrich and diversify the work of the historian. Nor has he the quality of those early medieval writers who, by using new terms or combinations of words, created strange and compelling subtleties of coloured language able to suggest things beyond perception ; a quality rendering their Latin so attractive an instrument to those modern readers for whom the white translucence of the classics is no longer enough. In the approach to these things Fortunatus, when once he forgets the Schools, rises superior to Gregory ; the man who wrote the hymns, *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*, and *Pange, lingua*, had in him a gift of expression of which the historian of the Franks shows little trace.[5] Fortunatus, as a writer, was two persons ; Gregory never more than one.

The *History of the Franks* lives on, secure of immortality ; it lives rather because than in spite of its artless, easy-going methods, with their lack of arrangement and logical plan. It has been remarked that these are defects typical of the Merovingian world itself, which almost seems to have created this book in its own image.

---

[1] Ruinart has the following words of praise : *Et sane, quantum libet simplici sermone scripserit Gregorius, res tamen gestas nescio qua ingenuitate et nativa eloquentia describit, ut nec iniucunda sit eius narratio, nec fastidiosa* (*Praef.* § 63).

[2] *La barbarie nous va plus que la platitude* (Th. Gautier).

[3] W. Raleigh, *Princeton Lectures*, 1916, ‘ Romance ’, p. 15.

[4] Preface to V. S. M.

[5] Unless the lost hymns to which Fortunatus once seems to allude should have revealed his too as a double nature. Fortunatus (*Carm.* v. 11) uses the following words of Gregory :

Carmina diva legens proprioque e pectore condens.

The last half of the line certainly seems to imply authorship.

Though its structure is irregular and the thread of narration often hard to follow, the book preserves the character of a real history; it is not, like certain early Chronicles, a dry register of events assigned to successive years, and so objective that the personality of the writer is never discovered.[1] Throughout, there is at least an effort, however unequal, to preserve the difficult sequence of the story; a great part has a dramatic interest, increased by the fact that the narrator was himself a leading actor upon the scene and reveals his own personality as he writes. In dealing with the period before his own time, Gregory followed a sound procedure; he consulted all the authorities accessible to him, some of which no longer exist, so that he was able to record facts not to be found elsewhere. This alone adds to the value of his work, but it is not the chief source of our pleasure or of our gratitude. We feel a deep debt for the vivid description of contemporary events, and for the imperfect, yet rich and variegated picture of his times. He makes the Merovingian world live for us in the persons of Franks and Gallo-Romans whom he interviewed, praised or blamed, supported or resisted. We meet people of every rank and of both sexes: kings and queens, dukes and counts, bishops, archdeacons, and priests, landowners and serfs, doctors and witchdoctors, merchants and adventurers, anchorites, abbots and abbesses, monks and nuns, small officials, bailiffs, craftsmen, fishermen. But for his writings, the whole pageant of Western life between antiquity and the Middle Ages, would be infinitely poorer than it is. Yet we may regret that Gregory, caring above all for movement and interaction, for the dynamic rather than the static element, too seldom stops to describe things at rest; he sketches his characters in their activity, he does not make them passive subjects for portraiture. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is not so lively a book as Gregory's *History of the Franks*; but we observe that nowhere does the bishop of Tours hand down the appearance of any man or woman personally known to him with such care as that with which Bede transmits the physical appearance of Paulinus. Bede was not a contemporary of Paulinus;[1] but he felt that posterity would like to know what his appearance was, and so took pains to preserve for it the portrait of the 'little dark man'. Gregory seems to have cared little whether people were tall or short, dark or fair, beautiful or ugly; he did not reflect that generations coming after him might have other sentiments; he was a man always pressing forward towards one or other of many goals, and reluctant to spend time upon what he would have regarded as trivial. He has the dramatic but not the pictorial sense. Readers of the History who perceive the extraordinary interest of the chief characters appearing upon this stage must ever deplore this indifference to a natural curiosity of mankind. It seems almost incredible that he should have so often met and conversed with the notorious Fredegund and the indomitable Brunhild without setting down one word as to the personal appearance of either; that he should have been the friend of Guntram and the active opponent of Chilperic without a hint whether 'the Nero and Herod of his time' was short and dark or tall and fair, animated or sullen of expression, or whether 'good King Guntram' was a burly man of the jovial Germanic type; that he should be silent as to the looks of that tragical figure, the pretender Gundovald; that he should give no hint as to those of Childebert II or Sigibert. They regret that he did not think it worth while to hand down any oral tradition as to the features of the formidable Clovis, the Atreus of a barbaric royal house, of which so many members died violent deaths and so few even approached old age. It is the same with inanimate objects. Our author is blind to the interest of whole groups of facts as to which we long to be informed. He does not pause to give the exact descriptions which would be so valuable to us to-day. He might, for example, have devoted a few paragraphs to the external appearance, the plan or the arrangement of the rooms, of a royal *villa*, a monastery, a farm-house, an average church. He might have told us how people dressed, what a bishop or a king, a great lady, a notable or a yeoman wore in everyday life. To scenery and the aspects of the country-side he was as indifferent as many Romans were apt to be, much more indifferent than Sidonius a hundred years before him. He must habitually have ridden by the Loire, but never dilates upon the beauty of its famous valley. He must have crossed and re-crossed half the fair land of France, but he leaves its praises unsung.[1] Nor, though his journeys took him through cornfields, vineyards, and woodlands, has he anything to say of the cultivation and their value to the state; as he has nothing in him of a du Bellay or a Ronsard, so neither has he anything of a Cobbett or an Arthur Young. He is no ethnologist. He saw Gallo-Romans, Franks, Burgundians, Saxons, Bretons, and perhaps Basques, but their difference in physical type, in tastes, in morals, and manners he does not record. Such poor harvest of knowledge upon all these things as we may bring together is the result of our own activities; but fortunately his wagons are well loaded, and something is left for the curious gleaner.

---

[1] e. g. the chronicles of 'Fredegar' (p. 37), or of Marius of Aventicum.

---

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 16.

It is perhaps no matter for surprise that Gregory finds it too hard a task to narrate without confusion and breach of continuity the chief events in the history of several countries over a long period of time; historians far more skilled in disposition than he have felt the same difficulty. But in the third, fourth, and fifth books the thread of the narrative is interrupted and renewed in ways which often irritate the reader used to the orderly arrangement of skilled historians; we are disconcerted by the sudden reversion to a sequence of events broken off so long before that we have lost count of it.[2] For instance, in V. 9 (15) he renews without comment the story of Franco-Saxon relations which he had as suddenly dropped in IV. 42. Still worse is the occasional inversion of the historical order of facts concerning a past more or less remote. Gregory is capable of strange anachronisms, as when, in the chapter of Book V just cited, he makes Lothar I an actor in events occurring seven or eight years after his own death. It may thus be said of the History without unfairness that it often lacks logical arrangement, that vital and inessential things are treated as of equal value, the former dismissed in a few words if information is scanty, the latter filling pages if the writer knows all the details with regard to them; that written authorities are inaccurately quoted; that events happening beyond the limits of Gaul are imperfectly known and recorded. All this is true. But the reader whose first object is a general light upon life in sixth-century Gaul admits but condones the charge; he bears with equal indifference much chronicling of dry facts, many chapters filled with arid theological dispute or superstitious tales. If he perseveres to the end, his main object will be achieved. Whatever sides of life may have been omitted, he will have fared well; he will be far too grateful for what he has received to exercise severity in criticism.

---

[1] Even the barbarous King Lothar I was anxious to see the beauties of the Limagne of Auvergne of which he had heard tell (III. 9).

[2] Cf. A. Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France* (1901), pp. 57, 58. Gregory had more than one book in progress at a time, passed from one to the other, lost continuity, and did not always remember what he had written or where a particular episode should go. 'Nous avons l'*Historia* telle que Grégoire l'a écrite, avec les incohérences, les imperfections inévitables dans un ouvrage composé par morceaux par un homme sincère, mais ignorant, écrivant dans des temps particulièrement troublés.'

It will be evident from what has preceded that Gregory is not a philosophical historian. He rarely seeks to explain the remoter causes of things; he does not always seem to realize the dependence of events upon wide general causes. Often he falls back on the Chronicler's method of presenting no other relation between occurrences than temporal succession. But this is not to say that no dominant ideas direct and colour his work. One such idea, though it may often temporarily vanish, as constantly reappears. His mind is penetrated by the belief that the whole creation groans and travails under many evils, and that against these the Church fights the battle of mankind, disputing the world with the heathen and confounding the misbeliever. For him the one hope lies in loyalty to the orthodox faith. Yet despite apparent acceptance of the belief held by many of his time, that the world was sinking in the decline of age, he does not hold that evil reigns alone. If a pessimist,[1] he is, as Molinier puts it, a Christian pessimist. When we have read the full tale of violence and guile amid which he lived, we are impressed by his relative optimism. He was often saddened, but his mind was unshaken by events menacing enough to daunt even the strongest.[2] Always con-

[1] In his introductions to Books I and II, he specially insists upon the coexistence of good and evil, and his intention to set down the effect of each in turn on the historical events which he is to describe.

[2] Two centuries earlier, Ammianus had expressed the real mood of pessi-

vinced that good had the power to counter evil, if men would only seek it, he refused to abandon the weary struggle. And indeed the Frankish nation, however barbarous, had yet within it principles of life and growth, not possessed in quite the same degree by other Teutonic tribes. It has been remarked that the kingdoms of the Vandals and the Goths had no roots, and were unable to resist the storms of time; none of these tribes could permanently constrain themselves to the complex needs of civil government. But the Franks, with military instincts equal to those of their strongest rivals, had a superior power of adaptation to new environment, and an equal power of imposing their own habits of life upon the country in which they had settled. Their refusal to live in cities, with the consequent diffusion of the race over the land, checked the corrupting influences of Roman city life.[1] Moreover, the Franks could give proof of a robust common sense, as when they more than once thwarted the folly of their kings by refusing to engage in fratricidal war (cf. VI. 22 (31)). Though it was often true that by mixing with Gallo-Romans they learned corruption, and that in return they taught roughness, it was equally true that as a result of long intercourse the Frank became more civilized, the Gallo-Roman manlier. After nearly three centuries of assimilation, there appeared in Charles the Great the genius able to create a new people and write the first chapter of French, rather than Frankish history.

Given the real capacity of the Church to lead, Gregory's guiding idea was essentially sound. In the Gaul of the sixth century, everything depended on the success of the Church; her bishops were the only pilots. They were still for the greater part of Gallo-Roman descent, with the Roman instinct for order and social life. By religious appeals, by spiritual prestige, by inherited diplomatic skill, by their superior education, they were able to coax, to threaten, and generally

---

mism in the following words: *Nihil multa et nefanda perfessis hominibus praeter lacrimas superat et terrores, ubi et praeteritorum recordatio erat acerba et exspectatio tristior impendentium* (XXV. iv. 25 quoted by J. W. Mackail in *Journal of Roman Studies*, x (1920), p. 115). Gregory had often excuse to utter a like lamentation. The belief in the coming end of the world is expressed in the terse phrase of 'Fredegar': *Mundus iam senescit*, and in the words of Pope Gregory the Great in his letter to King Ethelbert (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* i, ch. 32).

[1] Cf. Mackail, as above, p. 116.

to manage the unruly leaders of the Franks, thus materially reducing the cruelties and hardships which the poorer among the Gallo-Romans had to suffer. Gregory himself again and again resisted, not without success, the folly and wickedness of the Frankish kings. He did so as a churchman; he could have done so in no other capacity. Other bishops were pursuing the same course; and his manful character could not but indulge the hope that if the world survived this concentrated and ordered effort must in the end succeed.

The History has, therefore, a general guiding principle, even if it sometimes falls out of sight. Other criticisms can be brought against Gregory. He does not bring out obvious connexions between middle causes, though often the gathering up of a thread or two would have helped him to give unity and coherence to his narrative. He fails to see which of these mediate causes are of primary importance, which of them are insignificant, and will dismiss the first kind in a few words while he dilates in paragraphs or even pages upon the second. Thus he frequently mentions, but fails to bring into its due context that antagonism between the landed aristocracy and the Crown which was a cardinal fact of Merovingian history (p. 192). Events illustrating this perennial opposition are picturesquely told, but their inner meaning is not made clear: we read, for example, of the rough treatment of Queen Brunhild when she interposed to protect Duke Lupus, of the Passion, for it is hardly less, of the unhappy Gundovald, and of the deaths of Rauching and his fellow-conspirators, but we have to supply for ourselves the real causal link which holds all such events together.

Whatever the faults of the book in structure, whatever its defects in logical cohesion, it holds the conspicuous qualities transmitted to it by the author's character and natural gifts. He was a man of downright sincerity, a lover of his kind,[1] going to and fro upon their business and interested in their life; he had, besides, a true dramatic instinct, and a talent for direct narrative. His honesty speaks for itself; it is beyond question. His active kindliness and courage are soon clear to the reader;

---

[1] It must be admitted that in speaking of cruel acts committed against persons other than ecclesiastics he shows too little indignation. This is to be regretted; but in the age in which he lived cruelty was rampant, and the sensibility of all men dulled.

his experience of many-sided life finds expression on page after page, and sometimes interpolation of anecdotes is allowed to break the continuity of the main story. His greatest power is shown in the narration of dramatic events or incidents in which he was either personally concerned, or of which he had first-hand information. Take the scene in which King Chilperic and Queen Fredegund are sitting in a chamber of the palace, while their last surviving boy lies dying: the queen's sudden but vain fit of repentance, when she casts the tax-lists of her cities into the fire, and calls on Chilperic to do the like, is well told (V. 26 (34)). Take, again, the last scenes in the siege of Convenae, when Gundovald appears in his desperation upon the ramparts and tries to move the sympathy of his enemies by the story of his life; they jeer at him, he withdraws from sight, and soon afterwards is callously betrayed and brutally slain (VII. 38). Or take, once more, the outwitting of the savage Duke Rauching by the young king whom he had come to murder in his own royal house of Metz. The digger of the pit falls into the midst of it himself; poetic justice was never more complete, but we are made to feel that the story is true word for word (IX. 9). Consider, finally, the brief but impressive episode when the two bishops, Gregory and Salvius of Albi, come out of Chilperic's country-house at Berny-Rivière. They pause to look back on the home of the wicked king, and Salvius describes his vision of the avenging angel in the air above the roof (V. 33 (50)). All these narratives are vividly narrated; the writer sees human lives held in the toils of a destiny immeasurably too strong for them; he has the tragic sense. It must be admitted that he is lacking in the sense of humour; but the age was one in which the scope for that quality was narrowly restricted.

The *History of the Franks* shines with a lonely brilliance in exceptionally dark skies. There is nothing like it or second to it. Fortunatus is also rich in facts of historical interest, but he tells them mostly through the medium of monotonous and insipid verse; moreover, Fortunatus is an Italian and really a survival from a previous literary age (p. 81). The Merovingian chroniclers who followed Gregory in time, 'Fredegar' and Marius of Aventicum, though valuable sources, have left us annals rather than books, though the pages of the former contain interesting facts. A comparison with the later work of our own Bede naturally suggests itself to the mind; since this too was the ecclesiastical history of a Teutonic people. In sincerity the two writers are equal. In Latinity, as already observed, Bede is far superior; he was a correct writer whom the unscholarly Gregory cannot rival. In arrangement and disposition of his material Bede again takes precedence. And he too can tell a dramatic or picturesque story. He has, in addition, an almost Franciscan simplicity, lending a peculiar charm to much that he writes. But here the ascendancy of the Northumbrian abbot ends. A greater proportion of his book is occupied with past times than is the case with our History, and neither writer is at his best in describing past times. Even when dealing with contemporary events the secluded monk is at a disadvantage compared with the active and much-travelling bishop, knowing a multitude of people and known to all. Gregory was acquainted with all sorts and conditions of men; though not a worldly man in the bad sense, he knew his world, and it was a wider one than that of Bede. The population of Gaul was more various than that of Britain. Gallo-Romans, Franks, Celtic Bretons, Basques, Burgundians, Visigoths, Syrians, Jews—all at one time or another came within the purview of the bishop of Tours. Through the survival of so much Roman tradition, and the action and reaction between Roman and Teutonic thought and feeling, Gregory had a far richer scene than that accessible to Bede. Less saintly, he often seems more human, and not least so when he almost condescends to gossip. On all these grounds it must be admitted that his history is livelier and fuller of human interest than the austerer work of Bede, rich though that work may be.[1] The worst that we can say of him as a historian is that he has too strong a bias in favour of kings and others professing orthodoxy, as against heretics of every kind. This leads him too often to overlook wickedness in the former, and to impute it to the latter, in the one case ignoring obvious facts, in the other imagining facts of which he had no proof. Thus the ruthless Clovis, who cut down men like the grass of the field

---

[1] This remains true even though Gregory begins with the story of Genesis and expends most of his first Book on a digest of ancient history of little interest to the modern reader.

(II. 14), and the 'good King Guntram', who let men be slain from cowardice (V. 27 (35)), both receive from Gregory certificates of absolute virtue, which historians who judge on the evidence alone are unable to endorse. On the other hand, too dark a picture is painted of the Emperor Justin because that ruler was said to have favoured the Pelagian heresy (IV. 21), while Arians of all ranks habitually receive so short a shrift that suspicion is at once aroused in the critical mind.

Gregory is our original source for important historical documents as well as for historical facts. Thus he gives the diocesan letter of Bishop Eugenius of Carthage.[1] He alone transmitted the text of the Pact of Andelot,[2] that of the letters concerning the riot among the nuns of Poitiers,[3] and that of the sermon preached at Rome by Gregory the Great on his election as pope.[4] Where he draws upon other sources than his own knowledge, he sometimes fails to mention the authority, using a vague phrase like 'it is related' or 'men say'. But authorities he always has. He does not, as Ruinart has observed,[5] begin his story of the Franks with idle tales of refugees from Troy, such as his successors adopted in after years; he rests his narrative on true foundations.[6] For the summary of ancient history in Book I, his sources are Jerome's version of Eusebius, and Rufinus' Latin translation of Eusebius' 'Ecclesiastical history', from which he sometimes directly draws.[7] He used the Chronicle of Sulpicius Severus, and that writer's Life of S. Martin.[8] He was familiar with Orosius, and with the *Cursus paschalis* of Victorius, sometimes quoting the former author from memory. He had a general acquaintance with the works of the Latin Fathers, though of Eastern patristic literature he knows nothing. He mentions the *Gesta Pilati* (I. 21, 24). In Book II he gives several passages from authors whose works have not come down to us: Sulpicius Alexander (II. 9), who lived in the fifth century, and the somewhat later Renatus

---

[1] II. 3. [2] IX. 20. [3] IX. 10, 41, 42; X. 16. [4] X. 1.

[5] Preface to his edition, § 5.

[6] Among other late writers known to Gregory, apart from those from whom he borrowed his ancient history, were Lactantius, Prudentius, Martianus Capella, Paulinus of Nola, Paulinus of Périgueux, Sidonius, Avitus of Vienne, Hilary of Poitiers, Ferreolus of Uzès, whose letters are now lost, and his own contemporary, Gregory the Great (Bonnet, as above, p. 64).

[7] e. g. I. 8. [8] I. 7; Prologue to II. Cf. Bonnet, as above.

Profuturus Frigiredus, or Frigeridus (II. 8), from whom he derives events in the life of Aëtius.

For early Gallo-Roman and Merovingian history he could draw upon various Annals, consular, Frankish, and local; it is from these that he derives his enumerations of portents, storms, floods, and other natural phenomena recorded in the years before his own time; in his later books he is able to cite contemporary events of this kind on his own authority.[1] It is evident that he was also acquainted with Merovingian *Chansons de geste* and national legends now lost,[2] and with the work of court poets, both Latin and German. Several of his anecdotes of Clovis have a legendary aspect. The 'tales of clerical life' which sometimes interrupt the main historical thread, are probably well-known stories current among the clergy. Other anecdotes relating to secular persons and their affairs are drawn from the deep wells of popular tradition; they also break the continuity of the narrative, but are often picturesque reflections of contemporary life.[3] The Lives of Saints were another source not without importance.[4] He borrows from these, for instance, his details as to Saturninus and Ursinus (I. 30), Anianus (II. 7), and Maxentius (II. 37).

The resources of Gregory in the field of sacred learning are respectable, though he was not in the higher sense a theologian. He knows his Bible well, he can quote from it appositely on all occasions; he is ready with all the textual ammunition currently used against the Arians. He was probably more familiar with the Lives of the Fathers than with their works, and he was no Greek scholar. He had never, perhaps, felt the need of exploring for himself the heights and depths of religious speculation ; he received without question the doctrine of the original thinkers, provided it was approved by the Church. Though he regretted his lack of profound learning, he probably had less ambition to be a second Augustine or Tertullian than a good bishop and wise counsellor of kings.

---

[1] W. Arndt, M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.* i, Introd., p. 22.

[2] C. Pfister, in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, I. i, p. 248. Pfister thinks that such songs were nearer to the later *Chansons de geste* than to epic poems. Cf. also W. Junghans, *König Childerich und Chlodovech*, p. 10. The Franks were not famous among the Teutonic tribes for sagas or for love of poetry, and the number of epical tales at Gregory's disposal would in any case have been small. It has been observed that our author, so credulous, and so hospitable to ecclesiastical tales, is cautious and sparing in his use of the lay material.

[3] The longest example of such a *narratiuncula* is the tale of the rescue of the young hostage Attalus by Leo, the resourceful cook of Gregory, bishop of Langres (III. 15). Many of the clerical tales occur in the interpolated chapters added by Gregory himself to the earlier books. They probably represent the harvest of his sojourns in many a 'church house' and monastery, reaped after he had completed the writing of the original chapters.

[4] See A. Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France*, i (1901), pp. 94 ff.

His biblical quotations are of unusual interest because so many of them differ from the text of the Vulgate.[1] This is partly because Gregory is fond of quoting from memory, and does not always verify his references, being concerned rather to give the sense than the exact text ; we thus find him abridging, transposing words, and even intermingling different passages. But a more important reason is that he frequently employs, in place of the Vulgate, one of those earlier Latin versions still imperfectly known to us, and sometimes described under the general name of *Itala* ;[2] the Vulgate was not throughout a new translation, either from the Hebrew, or from the Greek of the Septuagint ; perhaps Jerome only translated in this way the Hebrew books of the Old Testament. As regards the Gospels, it is not possible to be sure how he was situated. He probably had Jerome's version, but this cannot be proved ; and he seems here to use other texts.[3] For New Testament books other than the Gospels he uses sometimes the Vulgate, sometimes other versions. The difficulty of determining his source is increased if, as is possible, different books of the Bible which he used [4] were either old texts revised from the Vulgate, or Vulgate texts with interpolations or other alterations from *Itala* books.

---

[1] See Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grég. de Tours*, pp. 54 ff.

[2] It is to be assumed that before S. Jerome's version, known as the Vulgate, there were several earlier Latin versions, one of which may originally have been known as the *Itala*. Some books of the Old Testament he left much as they were in these earlier translations. In rendering the Psalms he would naturally revise such versions by collation with the Greek text. Gregory the Great proceeded in a similar way : *cum probationis causa exigit, nunc novam, nunc veterem per testimonia assumo* (*Commentary on Job*, Introductory Epistle). Bede habitually did the same (Plummer, *Baedae opera historica*, i, p. liv).

[3] Bonnet, pp. 58, 59. If, possessing the Vulgate, Gregory yet uses other versions, this may partly have been because these were preserved in liturgies, and, therefore, fixed in his memory.

[4] Bonnet reminds us that Gregory's 'Bible' would have consisted of a whole number of different manuscript tomes, occupying no small space. He recalls two passages in the History (IV. 16 and V. 14) which show that parts of the Bible were clearly used as separate volumes.

The general conclusion is that Gregory's biblical citations are based not only on the Vulgate, but also on old Latin Bibles written in a barbarous, yet lively and expressive Latin.[1] The fact may have its bearing upon the question of his own style.

In his use of his authorities, sacred and profane, written and traditional, Gregory is scrupulously honest; he may give wrong facts,[2] or he may make verbal errors through his habit of quoting from memory. But he does not wilfully misrepresent any author. He well merits the fine tribute paid to him by one of his editors: 'he sometimes states things which are not true, but this is either because he did not know the truth, or because he was misled by his sources. He is never found guilty either of calumny or falsehood.' [3]

Gregory probably began writing his History within two years of his consecration as bishop. The first four books may have been finished in 575; the narrative does not appear to have been taken up again until 580, between which year and 584 or 585 Books V and VI were written.[4] These first six books he revised himself, at a later time, adding a number of intercalated chapters; [5] but it is thought that these books were withheld from publication during his lifetime, because of the references to Chilperic's queen Fredegund, as we have seen, a dangerous person to offend. No allusion is made to them in the published books on miracles, though the History alludes to the latter. Books VII–X were written between 585 and the year of Gregory's death.[1]

---

[1] e. g. the Pentateuch at Lyons. Other fragmentary *Itala* texts are preserved at Vercelli, Verona, Brescia, Corbie, and S. Germain. One such text (at Quedlinburg) is illuminated, and was published by V. Schultze in 1898.

[2] Such errors are most frequent in Books II and III.

[3] W. Arndt, Introd. to M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.* i, p. 21 *falsa interdum protulit, aut inscius recti, aut fontibus suis delusus, sed nunquam calumniator, aut homo mendax exstitit.* For the authority of Gregory see G. Kurth, *Études franques* (1917): *Étude I.* Kurth notes the conscientiousness of our author (p. 130) and his caution in dealing with legendary material; our author is naturally at his best in Bks. IV–X, when he is dealing with his own times.

[4] The above is the opinion of Arndt. Giesebrecht thought that Bks. I–IV and the first half of Bk. V date from about 577; the second half of V and VI–VIII, ch. 37 from 584 and 585, and the remainder of the work from 590 and 591. G. Monod (*Études critiques sur l'époque mérov.*, pt. i (1872), pp. 115–19) assigned Bks. I–IV to about 576, V and VI to 584–7, VII–X to 590, 591.

[5] These chapters are not to be found in the old MSS. of Class B^1. Their introduction is the cause of alternative numeration, and the use of numbers in brackets, which is rather troublesome in citation and reference, but at once shows the student where intercalation has taken place. These additions are as follows. Bk. I: 28, 29, 31, 33–8, 43–7. Bk. II: 1, 14–17, 21–3, 26, 36, 39. Bk. IV: 5–7, 11, 12, 15, 19, 32–7, 43, 48. Bk. V: 5–7, 9, 10, 12, 20, 32, 36, 37, 40, 42, 45–9. Bk. VI: 7–11, 13, 15, 22, 29, 36–9 (Arndt, M. G. H., as above, p. 17).

It may be of interest to say a few words on the subject of the writers who supplemented Gregory's work, or to the best of their ability carried on the task which he laid down.

The first authority strictly contemporary with Gregory is his friend, Venantius Fortunatus already so often mentioned, from whose poems and other writings much may be learned on events in Frankish history, and on life in sixth-century Gaul; the uninspired character of the verse must not lead the student to neglect it as a source from which additional facts may be gleaned. Marius, bishop of Aventicum (Avenches), in Burgundian territory,[2] was another contemporary, born a few years earlier (in 530 or 531), and dying in the same year as Gregory (594). His facts are mainly drawn from the *Fasti Consulares*. As resident in Burgundy, he has naturally a predominant interest in Burgundian affairs and places.[3] He has here and there fresh information to give, but in general he presents little that is new. He makes, for instance, the statements that Sigibert was slain *ab hominibus Chilperici*, and that the two unhappy doctors of Queen Austrechild, executed by Guntram at her request, were named Nicolaus and Donatus. His occasional mention of signs and wonders in the sky, floods, severe winters, and outbreaks of disease suggest that Gregory and he derive such facts from the common source of early annals.[4]

The most important of the continuators are the chroniclers whose names are veiled under that of 'Fredegar'. This is a fictitious name,[5] and according to Krusch, conceals the identity of three writers, two of whom wrote, like Marius, at Aventicum, the earlier in 613, the later in 642.[1] The third chronicler, also writing in the Burgundian area, added a few chapters about 658. The first three books of 'Fredegar', which summarize the history of the world from the Creation down to about 583, are compiled from Julius Africanus, Jerome's *Eusebius*, Idatius, Isidore of Seville, and Gregory himself. Book III is almost entirely taken from the *History of the Franks*, though episodes and stories (*fabulae*) are added,[2] with some facts from Burgundian Annals. 'Fredegar' is our sole source for the history of Theudebert II and Theuderic II, sons of Childebert II and grandsons of Brunhild, and also for much relating to their cousin, Lothar II, son of Chilperic and Fredegund, of whose early childhood we read in the History. Though unimaginative and somewhat dreary in outlook,[3] the writers known as 'Fredegar', are, as Krusch says, quoting Adrien de Valois, diligent and truthful chroniclers, but their excerpts from earlier sources are often inaccurately made.

---

[1] W. Arndt, as above, p. 16.

[2] Avenches is in the modern Switzerland; at some time after the death of Marius the bishopric was removed to Lausanne. The somewhat dry Chronicle of Marius is edited by Th. Mommsen in M. G. H., *Chron. Min.* ii, pp. 227 ff. Cf. also W. Arndt, *Bischof Marius von Aventicum*, Leipzig, 1875; and the same, *Marii episcopi Aventicensis chronicon*, Leipzig, 1878.

[3] Especially the Valais, and the monastery of S. Maurice d'Agaune (years 565, 574).

[4] For which reason the two writers sometimes use the same form of words.

[5] Cf. G. Monod, in *Rev. critique*, 1873, p. 253; the name does not occur in the manuscript: it was introduced towards the end of the sixteenth century. The best edition of 'Fredegar' is that of Bruno Krusch in M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.* ii, Hanover, 1888. Guizot in his *Collection des mémoires relat. à l'hist. de France*, ii, 1823, translated the Fifth Book, as alone containing important new facts. Only Gregory's first five books were known to 'Fredegar'.

The chronicle of John, abbot of Biclar (567–90),[4] is only important for relations of Merovingian Gaul with Visigothic Spain; thus it is valuable for the period comprising the last ten years of King Leuvigild. Various persons mentioned in the History appear in his pages, and many events recorded by Gregory are also related by John.

The extant lives of various Merovingian saints contain many details illustrating the life of the seventh century, which nearly resembled that of the sixth. They cannot, therefore, be ignored by the student of Gregory, who, as we have seen above, himself occasionally drew on older sources of the same kind. Especially instructive are the Lives of SS. Leger, Amand, and Éloi.

---

[1] F. Loth, *Rev. hist.* cxv (1914), pp. 305 ff., contests this view, ascribing the work to a single writer, *c.* 642, who revised his material in 660.

[2] In Bk. IV (ch. 36) the writer, who is fond of stories, draws on the Life of Columban, but as a rule his added stories are not taken from the Lives of Saints (Krusch, Introduction, p. 7).

[3] In the preface, the first chronicler laments that the world grows old (cf. above, p. 28), and that the mind of man is blunted. The style of 'Fredegar' is ruder than that of Gregory; the Roman tradition has been more completely lost. For other works on 'Fredegar' see A. Molinier, *Les sources de l'hist. de France* (1901), pp. 63 ff.

[4] He spent some years in Constantinople, returning to Spain in 576; he was an orthodox Catholic, and was banished to Barcelona, founding a monastery at Biclar. His detestation of the *nefanda haeresis* of Arianism was naturally intense, and he exults over the blow which it received by the conversion of Recared. He is a reliable chronicler, who strictly carries out his declared intention of setting down only those things *quae temporibus nostris acta sunt ex parte quae oculata fide pervidimus, et ex parte quae ex relata fidelium didicimus.* His Chronicle is best edited by Krusch in M. G. H., *Chron. Min.* ii (vol. xi. of *Script. Antiquiss.*), pp. 207 ff.

The *Gesta Francorum*[1] has no such authority as the works just cited. It is a short history of much later date, enlivened by legendary stories,[2] and only accurate where it copies Gregory.[3] It was a popular book in the Middle Ages, and in the Renaissance; upon it or upon works derived from it, Ronsard must have based his *Franciade*. The author was an unknown Neustrian Frank, writing about A. D. 700–27, whose original contributions to the history only begin to have value as he approaches his own time. For all the earlier periods he was, as Krusch says, *homo rerum summopere imperitus*. Nevertheless he knew how to discover and set down many interesting tales, including the episode of the battle of Droisi, which may have suggested to Shakespeare the idea of moving Birnam wood to Dunsinane.

---

[1] The best edition is that of B. Krusch in M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.* ii, pp. 215 ff. The correct title of the book is *Liber Historiae Francorum*. The author's style, though full of faults and errors, is rather better than that of 'Fredegar', whose Chronicles he did not possess. Cf. G. Kurth, *Études franques* (1917): *Étude II; Étude critique sur le Liber Hist. Francorum*; and A. Molinier, as above, pp. 66–8.

[2] Such *fabulae* are related of the origin of the Franks (1–4), about Childeric (6–7), about Clovis (11–14), about Fredegund and her cruel trick played upon Queen Audovera (31, 32). They were perhaps derived from popular songs and tales (cf. W. Junghans, *Childerich und Chlodovech*, p. 51).

[3] As soon as the writer has to leave Gregory, he cannot be trusted unless we can control his statements by 'Fredegar'. He only had Gregory's first six books.

III

THE MSS. AND PRINTED EDITIONS

THE present translation follows in the main the text of MM. Omont and Collon as printed in the new edition of M. René Poupardin.[1] For the first six books, this text is that of the Corbie MS. (at Paris), with the addition, already noted, of supplementary chapters inserted by Gregory himself when revising these books.[2] For the last four books, the text of Omont and Collon reproduces that of the Brussels MS. (p. 41).

Manuscripts.[3]

The MSS. of the History have been classified and tabulated by Pertz,[4] G. Monod,[5] W. Arndt,[6] and M. Bonnet.[7] They fall into four groups:

1. A, comprising all ten books.
2. B, containing only the six books of the first redaction.
3. C, in which Books IX and X are included, with the addition of the Chronicle of 'Fredegar'.
4. D, which includes all other MSS.

For the complete list of the MSS. of Gregory, the reader is referred to the four authors cited above. Poupardin's edition of Omont-Collon's text follows Arndt's list.

For the purpose of the present volume, it is only necessary to consider Groups A and B; even within these groups, only a few

---

[1] *Grégoire de Tours, Histoire des Francs,* Texte des Manuscrits de Corbie et de Bruxelles, publié par Henri Omont et Gaston Collon; nouvelle édition par René Poupardin, Paris, 1913. (A volume in the *Collection de Textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire.*)

[2] These chapters, reproduced from the great edition of Gregory's works in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum,* i (1885), edited by W. Arndt and B. Krusch, are printed in the French edition in small type. In the present translation they are not so distinguished; but their numbers have been italicized, in order that they may be easily recognized.

[3] For the MSS. and printed editions of Gregory, see also A. Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France* (1901), pp. 60–3.

[4] *Archiv für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde,* v, pp. 51–3.

[5] *Études critiques sur les sources de l'histoire mérovingienne,* i, *Grégoire de Tours,* Paris, 1872, pp. 49–54.

[6] M. G. H., as above, pp. 23–9.

[7] *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature,* No. 9, 1885, pp. 161–74.

MSS. need be mentioned. In Group A we may note A 1, *Cassinensis*, of the eleventh to twelfth century, because it was the MS. used by Ruinart in his great and still valuable edition. In Group B, we note three MSS. B 1, *Cameracensis*, MS. 624 of Cambrai, which dates from the seventh to eighth centuries, is in two parts, the first comprising Books I–VI, the second VII–X, with certain *lacunae*. B 2, *Bruxellensis*, MS. 9403 of the Bibliothèque Royale at Brussels, is that used by Omont and Collon for most of Books VII–X. It is of the eighth or ninth century, and is in three parts, copied by four scribes, one of whom completed the first six books, the second, Books VII and VIII, the third, Book IX, and the fourth, Book X. It lacks, however, Book I and the first two chapters of Book II; and is incomplete after Book X. 29. B 5, *Corbeiensis*, MS. latin 17655 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, is that used by Omont and Collon for the first six books. This MS. is written in a Merovingian hand of the seventh century. It was formerly in the library of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre at Corbie.

Printed Editions.[1]

In the sixteenth century five editions of the History were printed. The earliest, the *editio princeps*, is based upon an unknown MS. of Tours, and saw the light at Blois in 1512. It is a folio, of which the title begins: *Gregori Turonensis episcopi Historiarum precipue Gallicarum Libri X*, containing the *History*, the *Lives of the Fathers*, and the First Book of the *Glory of the Confessors*, together with the ninth-century Chronicle of Ado, bishop of Vienne. Nearly half a century elapsed before the appearance of a second edition. This was an octavo printed at Paris by Guil. Morelius, the king's printer, Gulielmus Guillard and Almaricus Warancor, in 1561. It also contains, in addition to Gregory's History, Ado's Chronicle, and other matter.

In 1568, an edition by Flaccus Illyricus was printed at Bâle by Petrus Perna. It is based upon an unknown MS. once belonging to the Abbey of Lorsch. This is the edition reproduced by most of the other editions of the century, and most of those produced in the seventeenth century as well.

The remaining sixteenth-century editions are those of

---

[1] For the complete list see Omont and Collon, ed. Poupardin, p. xx.

Paris, 1583; Cologne, 1583; and Paris, 1589 (vol. vii of the *Bibliotheca magna veterum Patrum*, edited by Margarinus de la Bigne).

The six editions of the seventeenth century appeared in the following places and years:

Paris, 1610; printed by Pierre Chevalier, Hainault, 1613; edited by Marquardus Freherus.

Cologne, 1618 (vol. vi of the *Magna Bibliotheca veterum Patrum et antiquorum scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*).

Paris, 1636; the History alone, in vol. i of *Historiae Francorum scriptores coaetanei*), edited by A. du Chesne.

Lyons, 1677 (vol. xi of *Maxima bibliotheca veterum Patrum et antiquorum scriptorum ecclesiasticorum, Saec. VI, pars iii*); edited by Philippe Despont, after de la Bigne's edition of 1589.

Paris, 1679; *Opera omnia* of Gregory, edited by Dom Theoderic Ruinart, Benedictine of S. Maur. This famous folio edition is based upon various MSS. and earlier printed editions. The volume includes 'Fredegar', and has at the end several valuable Appendices. Ruinart's text was the basis of that in vol. ii of Dom Martin Bouquet's *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, published in Paris, 1739; it was again the basis of the edition published by J. Guadet and N. R. Taranne, Paris, 1836–8. The text given in Migne's *Patrologiae latinae*, vol. lxxi, Paris, 1858, is a reimpression of Ruinart.

The last edition before that of Omont and Collon was the well-known critical edition of W. Arndt and B. Krusch, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, i, Hanover, 1885, the preface, by Arndt, being dated four years earlier.

The edition of H. Omont and G. Collon first appeared in two parts. Books I–VI were published in 1886, Books VII–X in 1893, both at Paris (Picard); the parts formed fascicules 2 and 13 of the *Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire*. The second edition, in a single volume edited by H. Poupardin, was published in 1913. A new text by L. Levillain is in preparation. It will appear in the series entitled *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Age*.

Among translations, French versions are naturally the most numerous.

The oldest, by C. B. D. (Claude Bonet Dauphinois), was published at Paris in 1610, though some copies bear the name of a printer at Tours. The next is that of de Marolles, Abbé de Villeloin, issued at Paris in 1668 in two volumes, which include other works of Gregory and the chronicle of 'Fredegar'. An interval of a century and a half elapsed before Guizot's translation of 1823, forming vol. i of his *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*. In 1836–8 Guadet and Taranne (see above) provided a translation for their text. In 1851 appeared the German translation by W. Giesebrecht, in the series *Die Geschichtschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit*, edited by G. H. Pertz and others. A second edition of this translation was issued in 1878, edited by W. Wattenbach. In 1859–61 appeared at Paris a new translation by Henri Bordier, preceded by the tenth-century Life of Gregory by Odo, abbot of Cluny, and followed by a summary of Gregory's other works.

About the same time (1861) a new edition of Guizot's translation (see above) was issued by A. Jacobs, with the addition of a treatise on the geography of Gregory and of 'Fredegar'. This edition was reprinted in a smaller *format* in 1862 and 1874. A free translation of the History by M. de Sauvigny formed the second volume of his *Essais historiques sur les mœurs des Français*, Paris, 1875.

The new edition of Gregory's text by L. Levillain (see above) will also contain a translation.

In English, hitherto no complete translation has appeared, but a version of selected parts of the History, the work of E. Bréhaut, was published in 1916 (New York and Oxford), forming a volume of the Columbia University Series: *Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies*.

This notice of the various MSS. and editions may fitly close with a few words as to the influence of the History in France from the close of the Middle Ages to our own day, a period in which the issue of printed editions made it accessible to students of political development.[1] The book became a quarry from which the partisans of conflicting theories alike produced arguments in support of their beliefs. A few writers, notably

---

[1] This phase in the life of the History was developed by A. Thierry, in his *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (1840).

Adrien de Valois,[1] produced impartial studies, attempting to weigh the facts rather than to colour them in the interest of a party. But the majority, whether democrats, liberals, aristocrats, or conservative monarchists, were all for using Gregory's Franks and Gallo-Romans as political material, and it is curious to observe how ingeniously the Franks were produced as witnesses in favour of contradictory opinions. They were called in support, now of a free aristocracy curbing on the one side the aggression of the Crown, on the other that of the people; now as exemplars of the sturdy individualism from which arises the republican spirit. They were called with equal effect to prove the value of a faithful nobility on which a king should base his power. They were again called in favour of the free election of constitutional kings, as defenders of liberty and national sovereignty against Roman imperialism. The Gallo-Romans were handled with a like dexterity. They stood for the Roman tradition in French polity against Teutonic invasion; they were the preservers of a Roman municipal life, and regarded as forerunners of the Third Estate; they represented peaceful discipline under a strong and ordered government. Among those who preached the value of the Gallo-Roman element were the Abbé Dubos (1734), the Abbé de Mably (1765), and F. de Bréquigny (1769). The claim of the Franks to recognition as the liberators of Gaul was maintained by F. Hotman in the sixteenth century, and by Mlle de Lézardière in the eighteenth. The champions of the Frankish aristocracy as a noblesse striving for an enlightened freedom were the Comte de Boulanvilliers (1695) and the Comte de Montlosier (1814), the former of whom condensed his faith into the sentence: *Tous les Franks furent gentilshommes et tous les Gaulois roturiers.* In fine, the story of the book as document is that of other early historical works which have served as stalking-horses for ardent pursuers of political ends.

---

[1] *Gesta veterum Francorum* (1646). The book was valuable to the theorists as the chief history of an immature period, undeveloped, but containing in itself the germs of all development. Such a period, as Guizot has observed, furnishes weapons for every theory, and to the partisan of every system: 'Elle portait dans son sein toutes choses, la liberté, la royauté, le privilège; et toutes choses dans un état d'inconsistance et de confusion qui a permis à chaque siècle, à chaque parti, à chaque homme, d'y voir tout ce qui lui convenait' (*Essais sur l'hist. de France*, 7th ed., 1847, p. 238).

IV

THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK

a. Clovis and his sons.

THE principal facts in the career of Clovis (Chlodovech), founder of the Frankish power in Gaul, are given below (pp. 91–6); in the present place stress will be laid upon those of his actions which show the real nature of the man described by Gregory as *magnus et pugnator egregius* (II. 11 (12)).[1]

The first and dominant characteristic is ruthlessness; Clovis knew no pity; he destroyed any man who stood in the path of his ambition, no matter whether that man was of his own race or even of his own kin. Syagrius, the defeated Roman who had taken refuge with Alaric, was surrendered to him by the intimidated Visigothic king, then secretly put to the sword.[2] His next characteristic was slyness. He possessed to the full the craftiness, the combination of which with outspoken brutality and personal daring was so frequent among the early Teutonic chiefs. His treacherous and merciless dealings with the Frankish petty kings whose existence threatened his ambitions show cynicism and hypocrisy, as well as a total lack of the sense of honour. The deaths of the son of Sigibert the Lame (II. 29 (40)), of Chararic and his son (II. 30 (41)), and of the brothers Ragnachar and Ricchar (II. 31 (42)), are astonishing examples of what could be done with self-approval by a Christian king, and throw an instructive light upon the value of his professions.[3]

---

[1] For Clovis see G. Kurth, *Clovis*, 2nd ed., 1901; W. Junghans, *Gesch. der fränk. Könige Childeric und Chlodovech*; F. Stein, *Urgeschichte der Franken und die Gründung des Frankenreichs durch Chlodwig*, 1897; F. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*; S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age*, 1926, Bk. I, ch. 3. Kurth takes a favourable view of Clovis, as also does Dill.

[2] *Gladio clam ferire mandavit* (II. 18 (27)).

[3] After describing the disloyal murder of Sigibert's son, and the proclamation of Clovis as successor to his kingdom, Gregory continues in these words: *Prosternebat enim cotidie Deus hostes eius sub manu ipsius et augebat regnum eius, eo quod ambularet recto corde coram eo, et faceret quae placita erant in oculis eius.* Large allowance must be made for Gregory's hero-worship.

But another quality was sagacity. Clovis possessed the shrewd power of gauging the trend of events. This is shown even in his conversion, which, if truly related, followed the Constantinian model; in a hard fight against his enemies, when his own gods seemed to have abandoned his cause, he prayed to that Jesus Christ whom Clotild had declared to be the Son of God, making his change of faith conditional upon victory (II. 21 (30)).[1] He was more than a soldier; he was a great national leader. He saw the usefulness of the more highly educated Gallo-Romans, whom he was ready to enlist in his service, and from whom he deigned to take advice (II. 23 (32)). He was very solicitous that no offence should be given to Gallo-Roman religious sentiment, as witness the case of the plundering soldier and the sacred vessel from Soissons (II. 18 (27)), and that of the man who took hay from the territory of Tours, where all was under the protection of S. Martin.[2]

We recognize in the man who at different times could act in the ways above described the fitting father of a Lothar I, and grandfather of a Chilperic. He transmitted to his sons energy and fearlessness, but also cruelty and treachery. The better qualities of his descendants, spasmodically appearing in Childebert I, and more consistently in his grandsons, Sigibert and Guntram, may have been due to his Burgundian queen Clotild, though she too had a latent savagery in her nature, which on one occasion, at least, broke through the defences of her piety (III. 82).

The sons of Clovis.

Theuderic, half-brother of the sons of Clovis by queen Clotild (II. 19 (28)), was an energetic and successful leader, whose ability as a soldier had been recognized by his father (II. 27 (37)). But though upon a single occasion he seems to have shown the virtue of gratitude (III. 2), almost all his other recorded acts were cruel, or treacherous, or both. He laid an ambush for his brother Lothar in his tent, during their joint campaign in Thuringia, and when detected through the alertness of Lothar, acted with a paltry meanness (p. 101). He sent an envoy to Munderic at Vitry with instructions to promise him safety on oath, then take his life ' and wipe out his memory ' (III. 14). He was almost certainly responsible for the strange episode on the walls of Zülpich (III. 8). He contrived the treacherous murder of Magneric (III. 14). He caused his kinsman Sigivald to be slain, and bade Theudebert subject Sigivald's son, his friend, to the same fate (III. 23). In fine, Theuderic had the worst faults of his celebrated father.

---

[1] Probably the conversion was premeditated, and of less dramatic origin, like that of Recared in Spain more than half a century later. It is not likely that Clovis, who intended at any cost to overcome the Visigoths, would fail to perceive how valuable an asset the profession of orthodox Christianity might become in the prosecution of his designs. The intense hatred of Catholic for Arian gave him the power to undermine Visigothic resistance even before he made his famous speech, with its pointed sectarian appeal, on the eve of his campaign (II. 27 (37)). His catholicism, as he well knew, ensured him thousands of friends within the Visigothic lines.

[2] *Quem dicto citius gladio peremptum, ait: Et ubi erit spes victoriae, si beato Martino offendimus?* (II. 27 (37)).

Chlodomer, the second surviving son of Clovis, and the eldest of those borne to him by Clotild, did enough evil to prove his powers before he was cut off in his prime. His cold-blooded murder of the unhappy King Sigismund and his family (p. 98) makes us feel that he well deserved his appointed fate (III. 6).

Childebert I, third son of Clovis, is revealed in a very unfavourable light in the History, though his benevolence and generosity to the Church are duly recorded. His response to the appeal by his sister Clotild for protection against her consort, the Visigothic king Amalaric (III. 10), may be counted to him for righteousness if her rescue was in truth his primary motive. Otherwise he is represented as a disloyal and mean intriguer, always plotting with one or other of his brothers against a third, making an ally to-day of yesterday's enemy, and an enemy to-morrow of to-day's ally (III. 9, 15, 23, 24, 28, 29). Though he more than once joined his brother Lothar, he had a particular envy and hatred of that king ; [1] this caused him to support his rebellious son Chramn, and secretly to stir up the Saxons against him, forgetful, as Gregory remarks, that Lothar always got the better of him in the end.[2]

[1] *Ut erat semper contra Chlothacharium regem invidus atque versutus* (III. 31). The *versutia* in this case lay in conveying to his own use Lothar's share of a sum of money which that king, in conjunction with Childebert and Theudebert, had exacted from the king of the Lombards.

[2] *Sed nec memor fuit Chyldebertus quod quotiescumque adversus fratrem suum egit semper confusus abscessit* (IV. 10 (16)). Lothar triumphed for the last time after Childebert's death, when he took possession of his kingdom and treasures, driving his widow and two daughters into banishment (IV. 13 (20)). Childebert was no match for his brother, who was of a nature much more ruthless and consistent in evil doing.

His worst and most unpardonable act was his summoning this very brother to decide what should be done with the children of their dead brother Chlodomer (p. 99). Gregory does not attempt to whiten the dark nature of this son of Clovis, outwardly a pious man, and a liberal supporter of the Church. He presents an odious character, of which we can hardly read without disgust. But if Fortunatus is to be credited, the good side of Childebert was often manifest, and his piety was something more than a matter of public observance. This builder of a church at Paris is ‘ our Melchizedek, of his own merit priest and king, who in the lay estate fulfils the work of the faith ’.[1]

Lothar I, brother of Chlodomer, Childebert and Theuderic, interests us more than these kings, inasmuch as he was the progenitor of the later Merovingians, the father of the princes contemporary with Gregory and protagonists in the History. His character in part explains theirs.

It is noted on a succeeding page that he was a capable and alert man, able to detect and defeat the treacherous plans of Theuderic (III. 7 : cf. p. 101). He was a man resolute to the last point of savage ferocity, as his butcher's part in the murder of his nephews sufficiently proves (pp. 99, 100). He was without scruple where his advantage was concerned ; we have seen him on Theuderic's death instantly ready to join Childebert in the attempt to dispossess his nephew of his inheritance (III. 23). Yet he was not without a better political insight. In a campaign against the Saxons, he was in the right in desiring to accept the terms offered by the enemy ; and the Austrasian leaders who roughly compelled him to fight were proved manifestly wrong (IV. 9 (14)).

We have but a qualified sympathy with this man when, his brother and nephew turning against him, he took to the woods like any other dangerous beast, and protecting himself with abattis, sought to strengthen his position by tardy prayers to God (III. 28) ; nor do we feel any pleasure when we read that his deliverance was effected by a sudden storm ; we cannot share Gregory's satisfaction that the petition of this royal assassin was heard. His conduct during the last phase of the rebellion of his son Chramn shows the old king torn between his natural affections and his natural cruelty (p. 109). In this case the provocation was severe, but nothing could justify Lothar's final action. Yet Gregory, just before recording it, had compared him to the greatest king of Israel. Going into the battle 'like a new David against Absalom' he had wept and prayed for the same justice from above which had been granted to the son of Jesse (IV. 13 (20)). After the awful death of Chramn and his children he felt compunction, and, going to Tours, besought S. Martin's intercession with the Lord for all that he had done amiss. But his last words, quoted on another page (p. 194), reveal the arrogance of his nature.[1]

---

[1] *Carm.* ii. 14 :

Totus in affectu divini cultus adhaerens
Ecclesiae iuges amplificavit opes.
Melchizedek noster, merito rex atque sacerdos
Complevit laïcus religionis opus.

This king was licentious, like nearly all his race, and tainted with their usual attribute of sly trickery. These qualities we see combined in the treatment of his queen, Ingund, and her sister (IV. 3). He always denied being the father of Gundovald (VI. 16 (24)), though the pretender maintained the contrary to the last (VII. 28 (27), 36), and his right was evidently acknowledged by Lothar's nephew, Charibert. The saintly Radegund (p. 67) found it impossible to remain his wife; and, when he had brought matters to a climax by putting her brother to death, left his court with the purpose of living in a nunnery; he showed some grace by munificent gifts to her foundation at Poitiers (IX. 42) and by leaving her unmolested. In the field he was not unworthy of his celebrated father. His last campaign against the Saxons was undertaken when he was some seventy years of age.

b. The grandsons of Clovis.

Theudebert, son of Theuderic, who died before his uncle, Lothar, deserves more than a passing notice. If unscrupulous, he was assuredly a man of action, and not without political vision. His capacity was perceived by a woman who shared some of his qualities. While he was maintaining his father's interests in the south of Gaul, envoys reached him from the town of Cabrières, sent by a lady named Deuteria, presumably a Gallo-Roman by descent, who invited him to enter the place in peace : ' No man, most pious lord, may resist thee ; we recognize our master ; come therefore, and do that which seemeth good in thy sight ' (III. 22).[1] On the death of his father, Theudebert, already a tried commander though only about twenty years of age, was able to defy the intrigues of his treacherous uncles (III. 23).

---

[1] Hitherto his only religious feeling had been fear of puissant saints (cf. IV. 2).

Gregory gives to this prince a praise only second to that awarded to his cousin Guntram ; he styles him a just ruler, a friend of the poor, and a man able to do kind deeds in a delightful way.[2] Above all, he was a munificent friend of the Church, and respected the persons of her leaders ; he remitted all taxes to the churches in Auvergne.

Theudebert clearly had generous qualities. Refusing to kill his kinsman the younger Sigivald at his father's bidding, he let him escape to Italy, and on Theuderic's death welcomed him back, restoring to him his father's property and adding gifts of his own.[3] When Verdun was impoverished and distressed, he granted the request of Bishop Desiderius for a loan, for which he refused to take repayment when it was offered.[4] Yet he was not always free from the unscrupulous greed of his race, joining with one uncle, Childebert, to cheat the other, Lothar (III. 31).

Theudebert had more success in foreign campaigns than most Merovingian kings. The scheme, attributed to him, of marching to Constantinople and seating himself on the imperial throne (p. 106) is somewhat conjectural. But it is probably true that he wished to inspire the Byzantine emperor with a correct idea of Frankish power ; and his policy may be regarded as less sordid and more far-sighted than that of other Merovingian kings. His death in 548 left the control of Gaul to less worthy members of the stock of Clovis than himself.

---

[1] Deuteria is described as *matrona utilis valde atque sapiens*. Theudebert found in her the attraction which she divined in him, and ultimately married her (III. 22). He himself was a goodly man no less than a capable (*elegans atque utilis*, III. 1).

[2] *Erat enim regnum cum iustitia regens, sacerdotes venerans, ecclesias munerans, pauperes relevans et multa multis beneficia pia ac dulcissima accommodans voluntate* (III. 25).

[3] III. 24. He received Sigivald *Gaudens ac deosculans*.

[4] Theudebert had evidently the reputation of being generous, for Desiderius says : *fama bonitatis tuae in universa terra vulgatur, cum tanta sit tua largitas ut etiam non petentibus opem praestes* (III. 34).

Charibert,[1] whose early death diminished certainly his part in Merovingian history, and perhaps the tale of his offences, has an interest for English people as the father of Bertha, or Adelberg, queen of Ethelbert of Kent, whose membership of the Christian Church furthered the mission of Augustine.[2] As a husband he was no better than most Merovingian princes. He put away his good queen, Ingoberg, to marry two 'daughters of a certain poor man', a weaver, who were named Merofled and Marcovefa. Marcovefa was a nun, and Charibert was excommunicated by Germanus, bishop of Paris, for taking her as his wife.[3] He also married a shepherd's daughter, Theudechild, the same whose importunity, after his death, was so shrewdly punished by Guntram (p. 55). Charibert was a man of violent temper, and when angry capable of outrage; he returned a bishop-designate to his city in a cart lined with thorns, afterwards fining him a thousand gold pieces, for having reversed an arrangement made by the king's father, Lothar (IV. 19 (26)). He was also avaricious, and not above taking a bribe to confer an office (V. 47).

Like his brother Chilperic, Charibert was no friend of the Church. Neither in his public nor in his private capacity do his actions reveal him as a man of consistently high character, but a kindlier side to his nature is suggested by his reception of the unfortunate Gundovald, after the death of Lothar I (VI. 16 (24)), and he may have deserved some, at least, of the praises which, like other royal personages of the day, he received from the usual source.[1] He was probably above the average of Merovingian kings in intelligence.

---

[1] Charibert had four wives and three daughters, of whom only Bertha has left an honourable name. Of the other two, Clotild and Berthefled, Clotild, the ringleader of the riot in the nunnery at Poitiers, was a woman whose arrogance, violence, and intractability led her into positive crime (IX. 39; cf. pp. 360 ff.); the second, Berthefled, was some time a nun at Tours, but 'had no care of the divine service, being given over to sleep and gluttony' (IX. 33).

[2] Gregory does not appear to know the name of Ethelbert. In one passage he speaks of Bertha as marrying the son of a certain king of Kent: *quam in Chancia regis cuiusdam* [*filius*] *matrimonio copulavit* (IX. 26); in another he does not even state that she married into a royal house (IV. 19 (26)): *quae postea in Ganthia virum accipiens est deducta*). Her mother Ingoberg was the most reputable of Charibert's wives: *mulier valde cauta ac vitae religiosae praedita*. She took counsel with Gregory before she died in 588–9, and provided for the enfranchisement of numerous serfs at her decease; she had been kind and charitable in her lifetime (IX. 26).

[3] (IV. 19 (26)): Gregory says that as the king refused to put her away she died, *percussa iudicio Dei*, the king himself dying shortly afterwards in 567.

Guntram, the second son of Lothar, outlived his brothers, becoming the adoptive father of their sons. Physically timid, he relied more often upon diplomacy than upon force of arms, but he was an unstable ally, changing sides at the first scent of danger; at the same time he was ambitious of dominion, more ready to annex than to surrender. In private life he was somewhat less debauched than most Merovingian kings; cruel only in moments of sudden rage or panic, and calmed almost as easily as he was roused. It was his habit to be generous and compassionate,[2] affable and easily approached. These qualities compensated for readiness to take umbrage and liability to absurd suspicions; they won him in his lifetime the title of 'Good King Guntram',[3] while his religious temper and devotion to the Church secured for him after his death the honour of sainthood. From the fifth book of the History onwards his name continually recurs, and a life-like portrait begins to take shape before the reader. It is through their familiars that kings are made known; and the bishop of Tours was on such a footing with Guntram that he did not feel bound to spare him either gentle sarcasm or frank rebuke. Gregory would not have been human had he not betrayed some partiality for a ruler so genial at his hours, and always so well-disposed to the Church. His judgements are indeed somewhat warped in Guntram's favour, though the king's weaknesses, and even his crimes, are not concealed. Guntram in some respects resembled 'le bon roi Dagobert' of later Merovingian times. He had the same affability, the same love of hospitality, and general kindliness. These are the qualities which become legendary in cruel ages where their opposites were the rule. Michelet summed up his character in an epigrammatic phrase, descriptive of the genial but nervous king. He spoke of Guntram as: *ce bon roi à qui on ne reprochait que deux ou trois meurtres*.

---

[1] Fortunatus, *Carm.* vi. 4. There he is described as peace-loving, pious, placid, constant, prudent, tactful, sound in doctrine, and a good Latinist:

Floret in eloquio lingua Latina tuo . . .
Qui vos Romanos vincis in eloquio.

[2] *Ut erat benignus et profluus ad miserandum* (VI. 36).

[3] *Gunthramnus, . . . rex bonus* (IV. 18 (25)). *Iuxta consuetudinem bonitatis suae* (IV. 23 (30)).

Many of Guntram's faults may be traced to personal timidity. It explains the chief blemishes in an otherwise lovable character. Its influence is suggested both by the rarity of his appearances in the field, and by his evident fear for his personal safety.[1] On the occasion of his visit to Paris after the murder of his brother Chilperic, he made in church an almost pitiful appeal to the people not to compass his death, but to leave him a few years in which to bring up his nephews, a thing which Sigibert, or even Chilperic, would never have done.[2] His untrustworthiness in alliance was perhaps partly determined by his timidity. We see him allying himself now with Sigibert, now with Chilperic, changing from side to side according to the prompting of his fears.[3] We receive an unpleasant impression of opportunism without really solid principles. His ambition to extend his rule led him to interpret his position as guardian to his two nephews in their minority in a sense so favourable to himself as practically to extinguish their territorial rights. He seems to have administered their kingdoms less for their profit than for his own, and to have exploited their situation as minors, for he not only held the reins of government, but apparently the strings of all the purses. His administration may have been better than any possible alternative rule, but it was arbitrary, and prompted by greed.

Sudden outbursts of rage or bitterness when things go wrong are a common mark of indolent natures, and thus may be explained many of Guntram's explosive humours. He did not look into abuses, or exert personal control where it was most needed. A conspicuous example of this negligence is found in his failure to control his army, a failure doubly culpable in the case of one who was not in the habit of leading it in person. Few Merovingian kings of the age prevented scandalous conduct on the part of their levies ; but at least their presence enforced respect and fear. No one feared Guntram, because he did not often carry out his sanguinary threats ; the offenders knew that they only had to wait, and the storm would blow over. His rebuke of his generals after the shameful issue of their campaign in Septimania (p. 130) failed of its effect because the men whom he attacked knew that his threats would not be carried out. He swore that whoever disobeyed the law should die the death. But the generals had plainly told him that the whole people was corrupted by misgovernment, that there was no fear of king or respect for duke and count, and therefore that the captains of his armies were set an impossible task. In his heart he was aware that it was true ; and the accused men, well knowing this, had little fear of execution.[1]

---

[1] Apprehension was pardonable in the case of a man often on bad terms with Fredegund. It was indeed unnerving to go to matins in the morning darkness and find a ruffian asleep in a corner of the church with his spear leaning against the wall (VIII. 44); or to be very nearly stabbed while approaching the altar to communicate (IX. 3).

[2] VII. 8 *Adiuro vos, o viri cum mulieribus qui adestis ut mihi fidem inviolatam servare dignemini, nec me, ut fratres meos nuper fecistis, interematis, liceatque mihi vel tribus annis nepotes meos, qui mihi adoptivi sunt, enutrire.* Guntram went carefully guarded.

[3] In IV. 33 he disagrees with Sigibert, and comes to an understanding with Chilperic. But as soon as Sigibert appears to be gaining the upper hand, back he goes to him; a mere threat is enough to change his policy.

The king's fits of petulant anger often made him ridiculous in word and deed. When Eberulf, chamberlain of his newly murdered brother Chilperic, was arrested on the accusation, probably false, of the widowed Fredegund, Guntram rose to the occasion with a tremendous and wonderful threat. 'I will wipe out Eberulf and his seed to the ninth generation ! ' He actually stopped mass because it was begun by Palladius, a bishop personally detested by him : 'Shall the sacred words be spoken by a wretch who was ever faithless and false to me ? I shall leave the church.' But he soon allowed himself to be placated by the other bishops and suffered the office to proceed (VIII. 7).

Other signs of a weak character were resentfulness and obstinacy. His umbrageousness reached the point of folly (IX. 28, 32), especially when he thought his own dignity was being slighted ;[2] he was very quick to take offence in dealing with his nephew Childebert, after the two had formed an alliance. In IX. 20 we see Gregory tactfully soothing him after he has delivered a characteristic tirade against 'my most charming nephew'. He was for a long time curiously suspicious of Queen Brunhild, accusing her of intrigue with the Visigoths during the time when he was on bad terms with them. He went so far as to declare that she was supporting Gundovald, and even that she intended to marry him, or even one of his sons.[1] The climax came when he worked himself up to believe that she was plotting his own death. He was punctilious with regard to the honour of the royal house, and obstinate in resentment against those who affronted it. He could never forgive the supposed insult offered to his niece Ingund by the Visigothic king. She had married Prince Hermangild, and King Leuvigild had not only killed her husband, but allowed her to fall into the hands of the Byzantine Greeks. Long after her mother and brother (Brunhild and Childebert) were ready to renew friendly relations with Spain Guntram persistently held out (VIII. 28; IX. 16). To him the possession of royal Merovingian blood atoned a multitude of sins. He received Clotild, ringleader of the revolting nuns at Poitiers, making her presents and endowing her with an estate despite her infamous conduct: she was of the blood royal (IX. 40), daughter of his brother Charibert, and therefore severe punishment was not for her. False pretence to royalty infuriated him; he could find no words to express his hatred of the pretender Gundovald.

---

[1] VIII. 30. Guntram lamented the lack of religion all about him, contrasting the victories of his ancestors with present failure. We have seen reason to believe that their piety did not go deep ; they conquered because they went into battle with their men, and maintained an iron discipline.

[2] Though he could be fair-minded, even in a question of *lèse-majesté*. The evidence not being sufficient to convict Baddo of this offence, he was acquitted (IX. 13).

He was sometimes malicious, having a little of the *faux bonhomme* in his nature. Theudechild, the widow of his brother Charibert, laid herself open to a rebuff, when after her lord's death she offered herself and her wealth to Guntram (IV. 19 (26)). He accepted the offer; but when she arrived, decided that the right place for the money was his treasury, the right place for the widow herself a nunnery; in this case the malicious humour was still further disfigured by a taint of dishonourable dealing. He showed, in fact, that he shared the unscrupulous slyness so often manifest in the Franks.

Guntram's worst deeds of cruelty were due either to the blindness of momentary passion, or to his fears; he did them either as a spoiled child, or in the calculation that his one safety lay in wiping out a dangerous enemy. In either case he sullied his career by detestable acts of violence. Examples of surrender to blind passion are his execution of Cundo, his trusted chamberlain, for no worse offence than killing a wild ox without leave in one of the royal forests (IX. 10), and his cruel torture of the envoys who brought to him the demands of Gundovald (VII. 32). The slaying of a certain Boantus without trial on a suspicion of disloyalty (VIII. 1) may count as an execution, the royal power being absolute; less defensible was the suborning of an assassin to kill Eberulf, at the time in sanctuary at Tours (VII. 26 (29)).[1] Sometimes the weakness of his character committed him to cruelty through other causes than passion or fear. Such a cause was his submission to the evil influence of personalities stronger than his own. Having weakly made to his dying queen, Austrechild, a promise that he would have her doctors slain as soon as she was dead, he had not the strength of mind to risk for himself the consequences of breaking it, and in cold blood sanctioned this heathen sacrifice, for it was hardly less; as Gregory says: *implevit praeceptum iniquitatis* (V. 27 (35)). And as he lacked strength of will to resist bad influence in the particular case, so he allowed himself to countenance characters of notorious cruelty and wickedness. After the murder of Chilperic his patronage of the widowed Fredegund exceeded the limits required by compassion for her widowed state, as Gregory at a later time pointedly reminded him (IX. 21). But Guntram was susceptible to feminine influence; under the glamour of Fredegund's charms he conveniently forgot her terrible reputation, and promised that he would be her strong defender (*magnum defensorem*, VII. 7, 14).[2] The habitual ruthlessness of this queen was such that nature soon drove her to disabuse a protector whom she doubtless regarded as a dotard. And so in a few months the afflicted widow became for Guntram 'the enemy of God and man' (IX. 21). He was altogether too lenient with the ruffianly 'fighting bishops' Salonius and Sagittarius, whom he reinstated in their sees after their deprivation by an episcopal council (V. 20 (27));

---

[1] Brunhild's reckless marriage with the unfortunate Merovech would lend some colour to the suspicion that she might contract an unseemly alliance for a political motive. But about the time when Guntram expressed his fears, she was battling with the Austrasian aristocratic party, the members of which were the real supporters of the pretender.

---

[1] It was characteristic of Guntram to stipulate with his *sicarius* that the murder should not be done in the precincts of the church. Fredegund did not stick at such refinements (VII. 29).

[2] Fredegund hoodwinked the king even when he had begun to suspect her (VIII. 9). But at last he admits himself to be deceived (VIII. 28, 29, 31).

at a later time he was obliged to acquiesce in their 'unfrocking' (*discinctio*).[1]

We have laid stress upon the gross weaknesses of Guntram, because he is one of those who have found an easy way into the Calendar of Saints, and the facts should not be disguised. But fairness demands that we should point to conduct and to actions upon his part which place him upon a higher moral plane than his royal kinsmen, and rank him, in 'Fredegar's' phrase, as 'a bishop amongst bishops'. It may be true that a grateful Church, dazzled by the benefactions of this generous king, failed in his case to see offences palpable enough to disqualify a person of lower degree. But there is a certain magnanimity in the canonization when it is remembered that, with all his deference to the episcopal order, Guntram in his bad moods could treat a bishop in a fashion which his brother Chilperic would have applauded.[2] His behaviour to Theodore, bishop of Marseilles, was disgraceful. The king suspected this bishop of intriguing against him with the Pretender, Gundovald. Theodore, a man of acknowledged sanctity, was first brought before Guntram in chains, treatment which Gregory roundly describes as *contra fas religionis*, dismissed, rearrested, and imprisoned, though nothing could be proved against him (VI. 11, 16 (24)).[3] Another offence of the king *contra fas religionis* was the flogging and imprisonment of the abbot of Cahors for carrying a letter of Gundovald (VII. 30). But such behaviour was not characteristic of Guntram, whose claim to saintly rank is based upon something more than liberality to the Church, and regular attendance at her services. It is a claim recognized by the common people during his own lifetime. When the plague raged at Marseilles he went about freely as if he were himself bishop of the city (IX. 21); his timidity was forgotten in the face of the common danger. It is not surprising in view of his repute for action of this kind, that a woman should have crept behind him and cut off some particles from the border of his mantle with the object of using them like similar fragments which had been brought into contact with recognized saints, or with their tombs (p. 257).

---

[1] The proceedings of these bishops were such that we are surprised to find a man like Guntram, always zealous for the honour of the Church, giving them a moment's countenance. It is doubtful if any other age or country has produced two bishops equal to this pair (pp. 285–6).

[2] Guntram's hatred of Egidius, bishop of Reims, was natural enough, this prelate being a disloyal intriguer. But it was too rancorous to accord with saintliness (cf. VII. 14).

[3] It was perhaps a mere outburst, not to be taken seriously, when Guntram shouted that Magneric, bishop of Trèves, might just burn with the traitor, Guntram Boso, then in his house, unless he could manage to escape in time (IX. 10). The bishop was got out by some of the clergy, but the house had already been fired.

Guntram was often, but not always, disinterested with regard to material gain. We are not unnaturally impressed by the noble air of his reply to a deputation that approached him with bribes, to secure the election of their candidate for the bishopric of Bourges (VI. 39). 'It is not the custom of our kingship to sell bishoprics for a price,' he proudly declared; 'and do ye avoid to seek it with gifts, lest we be branded with the infamy of foul avarice, and ye be likened to Simon Magus.'[1] This was said in 584; and it comes with a shock when we read that in the very next year he laid himself under something more than suspicion of accepting money from the candidate whom he approved for the bishopric of Eauze.[2] Moreover, this candidate was a layman, and he had promised the bishops to cease the practice of appointing laymen (VIII. (1)). But he often showed a complete freedom from the rapacity which degraded his brother Chilperic and certain kings of the earlier generation. When he took over Chilperic's kingdom as adoptive father and guardian of the infant Lothar II, he did not retain the property with which the late king had unjustly enriched the royal domain; he handed it back to the original owners.[3] When a refugee bishop came to him, he received him with great benevolence and made him many gifts, 'so kindly he was, and prompt to pity'.[4] In another place Gregory says of Guntram that he was *in eleemosinis magnus*, and the phrase is just (IX. 21).

Kindliness characterized Guntram throughout his life.

---

[1] *Non est principatus nostri consuetudo sacerdotium venumdare sub pretio.*

[2] VIII. 22. In the same year he does, indeed, refuse a bribe offered by the deacon Waldo for the succession to the see of Bordeaux, but once more appointed a layman, in the person of the Count of Saintes.

[3] But he made somewhat too free with his nephews' kingdoms, governing them by his officials as if they were his own. It is to be suspected that the revenues were not all used for the improvement of Austrasia and Neustria, and that the proportion saved for the young kings was less than it might have been.

[4] *Ut erat benignus et profluus ad miserandum* (VI. 36).

This quality is illustrated by a story in the *Gloria Confessorum.* A servant oppressed by certain influential persons in Lyons declared that he saw S. Nicetius appear to him, bidding him go to Guntram, who would feed, clothe, and protect him. Which the king did, and the promised results did not fail.[1] Men loved Guntram for his readiness to forgive, knowing that he soon repented of his fury. Of this characteristic Gregory was well aware, when, after the suppression of Gundovald's unhappy enterprise, he calmly brought into Guntram's presence certain prominent men who had taken the Pretender's side. Guntram rose savagely as they came in: 'Sly foxes!' he began, and stormed at them in his most intimidating manner. Gregory waited the end of the disturbance, and then said: 'I am sent on this embassy to thee by my Lord.' 'What lord is he?' cried the king. 'The holy Martin', replied the bishop of Tours. Whereupon Guntram became his natural self, received the men back to favour, and restored all their property (VIII. 6). The incident illustrates not only the king's character but Gregory's knowledge of men. Guntram was approachable and friendly. We have a pleasant picture of him at Orleans, going about as 'the good king' among the people, giving and accepting invitations. He delighted to see at his table the bishops then assembled in the town, and insisted upon a singing-competition between their deacons, afterwards discoursing pleasantly about his silver-plate. The next morning he looked in upon Gregory at his lodging in the most friendly way (*benigno animo ingressus*) and received a cup of wine from his hands (VIII. 1, 2).

As Brunhild was the Queen Mother, so Guntram was the King Uncle of the time by virtue of his position as guardian to the young kings Childebert II and Lothar II. When we have pieced together the various mentions of him in the History we know the man as he lived and moved, and well understand the dismay of the bishop of Périgueux on finding his diocese suddenly transferred from Guntram to Chilperic;

---

[1] G. C. 60. When Childebert begged him to send an army to join his invasion of Lombardy, Guntram refused on the ground that he would not expose his men to the plague then raging in that country. He may in this case have been making a plausible excuse for avoiding a distasteful adventure, but it is quite likely that his solicitude was real, and he should have the benefit of the doubt.

he said that it was falling from Paradise into Hell (VI. 22). When the king died in the thirty-third year of his reign he was perhaps more widely mourned than any other member of his line. Despite his many and grave lapses we may say of Guntram what Dr. Johnson said of our own Charles II, that he was a king who could make admirable appointments to bishoprics, and always had a reverence for what was good, though he might not always himself pursue it. Throughout his life he stood more consistently for the right than any other king in Gaul, and in such an age as that in which he lived, this relative virtue may perhaps count as a higher distinction than an imperturbable goodness in times less ignorant and cruel. The portrait of Guntram is the best of those drawn by Gregory. He allows his subject to talk, recording his very words; we are left with a clear impression of a human type. To have produced such a portrait in the darkest period of letters is in itself a literary achievement.

Sigibert, the third son of Lothar I, left behind him a better name than most Merovingian princes when, in the year 575, he was cut off in his prime. He was a soldier and possessed a diplomatic resourcefulness[1] which on one occasion brought him safely out of a dangerous position (IV. 22 (29)). Though not always successful in his campaigns, some of which he seems to have been little justified in undertaking (IV. 23 (30)), he was a stout defender of his frontiers. The great blot upon his reputation was the reinforcement of his armies against Chilperic by hordes of pagan Teutons from beyond the Rhine (IV. 34 (49), 35 (40)). This was felt to be an outrage against his race and country; though on the first occasion he repented, and on the second he could plead in palliation the gross treachery of Chilperic, his action has left a stain upon his memory.

Sigibert had magnanimity. When he took Chilperic's son, Theudebert, prisoner he released him on receiving a promise (afterwards broken) that the prince would not bear arms against him again (IV. 16 (23)); he did it 'of his clemency', says Gregory (*ut erat clemens*).

He was distinguished among nearly all Merovingian princes by his freedom from licentiousness, and his disdain for the amours and low connexions of his brothers. Disgusted by the manner in which they degraded the house of Merovech, he sought and obtained the hand of Brunhild (p. 69), daughter of the Visigothic king Athanagild (IV. 20 (21)); the dignity of this alliance rousing the unworthy Chilperic to disastrous emulation (p. 111). It is probable that sharing the ideas of his queen as to the supremacy of the royal house, he was little beloved by the Austrasian aristocracy. But his character was sufficiently determined to make it probable that, if he had lived, he might have kept his adversaries down. The portrait of Sigibert, in Gregory, is like an official bust compared to the vivid presentation of his brother Guntram. It lacks the life awakened by intimate knowledge of the person, and we suspect that the person himself may have been cold.

---

[1] *Ut erat elegans et versutus* (IV. 22 (29)).

King *Childebert II*, who succeeded Sigibert as a boy of five, inherited some of his father's respectable qualities, but was not always honourable in diplomatic relations, as shown by his proceedings with regard to the invasion of Lombardy. His position in Gaul as a minor and a young ruler was difficult. The ascendancy of his masterful mother involved him in her policy of opposition to the aristocratic party to which he had owed his escape from Chilperic when a child (V. 1). His good relations with his astute uncle, the king of Burgundy, were disturbed by Guntram's greed for territory; when he grew up he could not tamely acquiesce in the subtraction of the half of Marseilles which belonged to Austrasia (VI. 22 (31)). In consequence of this injustice he permitted negotiations with Chilperic, the agents being representatives of the very party which Brunhild would have taught him to detest. With the restoration of the Austrasian half of Marseilles in 584 (VI. 24 (33)), relations with Guntram improved; despite occasional friction, they were drawn closer by the common danger of the Gundovaldian plot and the formal adoption of Childebert by Guntram. Upon the whole Childebert conducted his affairs with fair success, and on his death bequeathed to his son a kingdom doubled by his inheritance of Burgundy.

Childebert's personal character was not without strength, though when provoked he was capable of sanctioning acts of terrible cruelty (e. g. VIII. 29, 36; IX. 38; X. 18). For a Merovingian king his private life was respectable; he was capable of kindliness (IX. 12), and was not devoid of religious feeling (IX. 38). Though at one time he had shown a suspicious tendency to tax the privileged people of Tours (IX. 30), he later won Gregory's approval, remitting Church taxation with a display of *larga pietas* (X. 7). When the difficulties of his position are duly taken into account it must be allowed that Childebert ranks, like his father, among the better Merovingian kings, though we have no intimate pictures of his private life.

After reading the story of King Lothar I, we are somewhat surprised that the sons of such a man should not have been even worse than they were. None of them having Radegund for mother, we may conjecture that the obscure queens who bore them may have come of finer strains than their lord, or, that the qualities introduced into the Merovingian line by Clotild, the Burgundian queen of Clovis, predominated at least in the case of Sigibert and Guntram.

Chilperic, the worst of Lothar's sons, is the villain of the History. His lack of moral sense is so absolute that the occasional swerve towards decent conduct seems always the effect of chance, never of grace. Yet he was probably the most gifted of the brothers. He had a curiosity of mind and a feeling for beautiful things which might have set him, had he lived in the Italy of the fifteenth century, among those princes whose service to art almost hides from posterity the evil of their lives; he might have won some such reputation as that of Sigismondo Malatesta, sinister indeed, but of a strange attractiveness. Born in a rude age, with a bad heredity,[1] unhelped in youth by wise upbringing, he was left to cultivate his original sin in such a way that without encouragement from others he must have come to disaster by his own moral gravitation. But it was his misfortune that his speed on the road to ruin was doubled by his subjection to a nature more evil and more pertinacious than his own. Susceptible as he was to female charm, his union with the worst woman of the age made his case hopeless.[2] It was in vain that now and then he acted justly, honestly, reasonably, or even kindly;[3] she was always at hand to draw him back into the groove of sordid wickedness.[1] Had he married a better woman he might have been saved from his worst excesses, for a strong woman might do with him as she would.[2] As it was, he was reputed 'the Nero and Herod of his time' (VI. 33 (46)).

---

[1] It may be noted that Chilperic had not the same mother as the half-brothers for whom he had so little affection.

[2] Ronsard, who saw in this union the secret of the king's ruin, moralizes in *La Franciade* on the king's inevitable fate (p. 74).

[3] Cf. V. 3, 49; VI. 12 (19), 22 (31), 36.

The character of Chilperic was revealed by the part which he played in history after his father's death (pp. 110 ff.); all is usurpation and treachery; a rancorous jealousy of Sigibert was one of his master passions.[3] He was grasping and cruel to his subjects, showing no mercy to those who could not pay heavy taxes, and using bishoprics as rewards for laymen, or keeping them vacant that he might seize the revenues.[4] His ill-will to the Church on account of its growing wealth was openly expressed; he complained that the increase of ecclesiastical revenues was bringing him to poverty. Whenever he had the opportunity, he vented his spleen in caustic remarks, as when, speaking of bishops and their clannish ways, he told Gregory in the garden at Paris, that crows do not pick out crows' eyes (V. 12 (18)).

His private life was open to criticism on almost all grounds; but Fredegund, when once she was seated on the throne, saw to it that he did not openly infringe her rights. His subjection to her amounted to servitude; he callously sacrificed to her hatred not only his former queen, Audovera,[5] but that unfortunate queen's sons. His surrender of the youngest of them, Chlodovech, was particularly heartless. He must have known well that Fredegund intended the prince's destruction; yet he feigned to believe his death natural, and did not show sincere grief. It was Gregory's opinion that this king never knew the meaning of true love, and on his death he wrote of him the terrible sentence which might have been an epitaph: 'he loved no man with a pure affection, and was beloved of none.'[1] The judgement is borne out by the scene after Chilperic's murder; his body was left to the care of a bishop who happened to be at the royal villa at the time.

---

[1] On one occasion she urged him to an act of generosity, when she burned the tax-lists (V. 26 (34)), but it was under the influence of fear; she was not herself.

[2] This was not entirely due to his sensual nature; his intellect had some part in it. *C'est un féministe*, says a French authority on the Merovingian period (Pfister, in Lavisse, *Hist. illustrée de la France*, ii, pt. i, p. 137). Chilperic recognized a wife's right in certain cases to inherit ancestral lands (Behrend, *Lex. Sal.* Cap. V. 3).

[3] For one thing, Sigibert had secured a better share than that awarded to him, and obtained the rich lands of Touraine which Chilperic regarded as his by right. But probably his hate was fanned by contemplation of this brother's respectability. The marriage of Sigibert to the Princess Brunhild filled Chilperic with spite; he was not satisfied until he had obtained the hand of her sister Galswinth for himself. But soon the taste of the royal Bohemian for low company led to the catastrophe of Galswinth's murder (IV. 21 (28)), an event which still further embittered relations between his court and that of Austrasia. It was an action at once impolitic and savage:

Acte d'un Scythe, et non d'un roi de France,

says Ronsard (*La Franciade*, Bk. IV: ed. Laumonier, vol. iii, p. 159).

[4] He would threaten Church lands with devastation (V. 8), and try to tax them (V. 21 (28)), only abandoning his attacks when fear of the supernatural daunted him for a while (V. 26 (34)).

[5] He did not prevent her cruel death in the monastery to which she had been relegated (V. 29 (39)).

The falsity and trickery of Chilperic were shown at every turn. His great disloyalties are mentioned elsewhere (pp. 110, 117); here we may note one characteristic of the age and of the man. Having joined with his brothers in a solemn oath that none of the three would enter the city of Paris without the consent of the others, he rode openly into the town as soon as it suited his plans to do so. The oath had been taken in the name of certain saints, and the superstitious king thought that the effects of their wrath would surely be cancelled were he preceded by the relics of many others;[2] a preponderance of spiritual force would be his. He deemed the trick successful, since nothing untoward befell. Not so the Church, which was persuaded that his death, following not long afterwards, was the plain result of this perjury.[3] More subtle than this conjuring with relics was the sharp practice by which he sought to secure the condemnation of Praetextatus by the council of his brother bishops. He affixed to the collection of Gallican canons new sheets with a non-Gallican but genuine canon, the terms of which favoured his claims (V. 12 (18)).

If Gregory ever saw the panegyric of Chilperic and his queen written by his friend Fortunatus on the occasion of the Council at Berny (V. 49), he cannot but have felt disgust.[4] In that extreme example of court-flattery Chilperic's renown is said to be known as far as the Indies. It is natural that his father

---

[1] *Nullum unquam pure dilexit, a nullo dilectus est* (VI. 33 (46)).

[2] *Reliquiis sanctorum multorum precedentibus* (VI. 19 (27)).

[3] What Guntram thought of his strange brother is revealed by the vision of Chilperic's doom, related by him to Gregory. He saw him, he says, his limbs having first been broken, plunged by three bishops into a boiling cauldron (VIII. 5).

[4] Fort. *Carm.* ix. 1.

Lothar should have recognized in him the best of his sons; the old king's judgement was unerring: *Iudicium regis frangere nemo potest.* His usurpations are glossed over; his escape from disaster at the hands of Sigibert, really due to a detestable murder, is ascribed to fate, not without divine assistance (*eripuit gladiis sors, operante Deo*). Let the good king (*rex bonus*) not grieve at Fortune's blows: out of her evil good comes, while he himself is stronger through his trials. He is feared by all peoples; but in his own land a model of justice, one at whose judgements fraud flies and order returns. He is eloquent and a good linguist. His munificence raises up the poor. He is versed in poetry and apt in learning, therein surpassing his royal forefathers. May he live long and prosperously in peace and happiness, the guardian of the Catholic faith. Perhaps the following is the most astonishing line in the whole sorry performance:

Nil dolet amissum, te rege superstite, mundus.

It is strange to compare this fulsome eulogy with the stern judgements in the History, and to reflect that the authors were both members of the Church and familiar acquaintances. The difference must partly be set down to temperament, but much may be explained by the fact that Gregory published nothing during Chilperic's life, while Fortunatus may have been called upon to celebrate the issue of the Council in verse which must needs fall under the king's eye. The one writer, therefore, had no reason to conceal real feelings, the other some excuse for what he did, especially as warm panegyric had been an accepted Roman tradition. But those lines of the poem which allude to Chilperic's literary tastes have at least some foundation. The king, whose intellectual curiosity we have already noted, was in fact interested in poetry, and himself had ambitions to be known as a Latin poet. The candid Gregory tells us that the king tried to write in the style of Sedulius, though he could not distinguish between a long foot and a short, and all his verses hobbled[1] (VI. 33 (46)). This barbaric ruler was fascinated by a culture which he could not make his own. In order the better to adapt the Roman language to Frankish ears, he tried to enforce the addition of four Greek letters to the Latin alphabet (V. 32 (44)); the attempt ended in failure, but a mere savage would not have made it. The activity of his mind is further attested by his excursion into theology, which seems to have quite alarmed orthodox opinion, if we may judge from the heat displayed by Gregory (V. 32 (44)).[1] Fortunatus might have laid more stress on Chilperic's real love for art, even if the only kind of art for which his enthusiasm is recorded is that of the goldsmith and jeweller. He had a patriotic pride in the skill of the Frankish craftsman, hoping to make him the equal of the Byzantine goldsmith (VI. 2). He had a *fournisseur* to supply him with fine things, a Jew named Priscus, of whom he made a favourite until his great effort at conversion (VI. 5) interfered with the unequal friendship.

---

[1] He did not succeed, in fact, so well as Charles the Great, who under the instruction of Theodulf, bishop of Orleans, learned to write correct, if undistinguished, Latin verses.

Enough has been said to show that Chilperic was a most remarkable man for the age in which he was born. In spite of his failures in literature he may not have been wholly wrong in feeling that there was something of the artist in his own composition. He might have been a good actor; he had certainly an idea of dramatic effect. When his brother Guntram and his nephew Childebert formed a powerful coalition against him, he went off and busied himself with the construction of circuses for the provision of popular shows; as an expression of contemptuous indifference, this was an artist's gesture. If in his coarser vices he was the epitome of his time, in many of his qualities he was ahead of it: his versatility and his feeling for the aesthetic side of life are startling to the reader inured to the heavy brutalities of the sixth century; an amateur and dilettante among the earlier Merovingians is stranger than Saul among the prophets. Gregory, who suffered much from him, is not unnaturally biassed against him; he hated the man and avoided his company; perhaps he speaks too slightingly of his attempts at culture. They may have been superficial and capricious, but the fact that they were made at all proves that the Neustrian king had intelligence, and that an original mind was not wholly exhausted in the service of his coarser pleasures. Gregory's comparison of him to Nero was not inapt. Like the Roman emperor, Chilperic profits by the advantage which virtuosity lends to historic criminals; an original turn of mind and a smattering of the arts have often deflected the judgement of a posterity that forgives all faults but dullness.[1]

---

[1] Gregory had an excited argument with the king, and claims to have confuted him to his intense annoyance: finally, Chilperic gnashed his teeth but held his peace (*frendens siluit*).

c. *The queens and royal ladies.*

S. Radegund, sometime queen of Lothar I, a personality in the pages of Fortunatus, passes quietly and like a ghost across the stage of the History. Her name is invoked in the account of the nuns' rebellion which after her death disgraced her monastery; her voice, grave and remote, comes to us through the anxious phrases of the letter in which she commended her foundation to the protection of Gallican bishops for all future time.[2]

Radegund, daughter of Berthar, king of Thuringia, was a very young girl when she fell into the hands of the Frankish king, Lothar I,[3] who after providing in some measure for her education,[4] soon made her his queen (p. 102). She was no companion for a libertine; and before long he was complaining that he had taken into his house no consort, but a nun.[5] When he caused her brother to be put to death (III. 7), she fled to S. Médard, bishop of Noyon, who was at first unwilling that she should take the veil; but she precipitated matters by putting on a nun's habit and confronting him at the altar, whereupon he made her a deaconess;[1] thence she went for a time to Tours to venerate the shrine of S. Martin,[2] and after that to a *villa* in the territory of Poitiers.[3] She later founded her own monastery, known from her time as the Monastery of the Holy Cross, Bishop Pientius of Poitiers, and Duke Austrapius, himself afterwards a bishop, directing the work. Having assembled a community of nuns, she made a protégée named Agnes abbess, and thereafter subordinated herself to her new superior. Though Lothar had at one time thought of bringing Radegund back, he was dissuaded from this course, and himself endowed the new foundation (IX. 42).

---

[1] It is not recorded that Chilperic ordered the murder of his mother, but were the fact to be discovered it would cause no surprise. He may well have tried his hand at music, and we can readily picture this king in his palace on the Isle de la Cité, singing his own verse to the Frankish *harpa* as he watched Merovingian Paris burn.

[2] The chief authorities for S. Radegund are Fortunatus, whose Life fills four books, and the supplementary Life by Baudonivia, a nun who had lived in the monastery of the Holy Cross in the queen's lifetime (M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.* ii (1888), pp. 364 ff.). Fortunatus had omitted facts of interest, for instance, the translation of the relic of the True Cross, and the circumstances attending Radegund's death and burial. The abbess and nuns, therefore, requested Baudonivia to make good the omissions, and she wrote her Life shortly after 600.

[3] Fortunatus says: *fit contentio de captiva*, adding that Lothar and his brother would have come to blows had not a settlement been agreed upon. Baudonivia tells us that Lothar won the young princess *per sortem*.

[4] She was placed in one of the royal *villae* at Athies (arrondissement of Péronne) where she was entrusted to governors responsible for her upbringing (*nutriendi causa custodibus deputata*), and her education was continued (Baudonivia, i. 2).

[5] *Ibid.*, 4, 5.

From the lives by Fortunatus and Baudonivia we gather that Radegund was a woman of deep religious feeling, always seeking to live a saintly life. They both lay stress upon her austerities and her self-denying works of mercy. But Fortunatus, as we have seen from his poems addressed both to her and to the abbess Agnes, reveals her in a character which the nun had less opportunity of knowing: that of a kind and hospitable neighbour (cf. p. 84). Radegund was broad-minded, and though she might inflict hardships on herself she did not enforce them upon those who had not taken vows. The tears of the nuns, gathered to see her bier pass, show the affection in which she was held,[4] an affection to which Baudonivia gives fine expression, when writing of the general sadness after the queen's death: 'Her eyes were closed, and over ours there came a darkness.'[5] Gregory himself, contemplating her dead body, stood in awe, ' trembling as if she had been the blessed Mary.'

---

[1] Baudonivia, i. 12.

[2] She offered great gifts both at the shrine and the 'cell' at Candes, where the saint had died (*ibid.* 14).

[3] Fortunatus (*Vit.* 14) calls it *villa Suaedas*, Baudonivia *Suedas*; it seems to be the modern Sais, or Saix, between Tours and Poitiers. Neither Fortunatus nor Baudonivia gives us a clear idea of the foundation of Radegund's own monastery at Poitiers, or of its situation. The monastery may have been outside the walls of the town, but the events related in Bk. IX show that it cannot have been very far away. In the early stages of her religious life Radegund did the most menial work, and practised every kind of charitable action, feeding and washing the poor, entertaining lepers, and tending the sick. Her own food consisted of coarse bread and vegetables, and she drank nothing but water or a kind of perry (*ibid.*, 15–20). She wore a hair-shirt, in which she slept on a bed of ashes; she placed chains and iron bands on her limbs; she branded and burned her flesh (*ibid.*, 22–6). Miraculous powers were soon attributed to her, and were performed at her tomb after her death (*ibid.*, ii. 17 ff.).

[4] They called down from the windows, begging that it might pause awhile.

[5] *Vita*, ii. 21.

Queen Brunhild.

The name of Brunhild,[2] consort of Sigibert of Austrasia and mother of Childebert II, is conspicuous in the History from the Fourth Book onwards, while her life after Gregory's death is known to us from a later source of high authority.[3] She represents a level of culture and attainments above that of other Merovingian queens. We have seen that Sigibert, an orderly man with some respect for royal dignity, was ashamed of certain marriages contracted by his brothers with women of no education and little character, and how he sought an alliance which should do honour to his country. He looked naturally to the Visigothic court, which was probably more civilized than that of any Frankish kingdom, and choosing the younger daughter of King Athanagild and Queen Goisvinth, was successful in his suit. The princess Brunhild came into Gaul in 566, and we have, from the pen of Fortunatus, who was at Sigibert's court at the time, a nuptial poem [4] in his most elaborate manner, though on this occasion the subject of the eulogy deserved it better than was usually the case with those who received his praise. It is said that Brunhild herself was one of the very few present who knew enough Latin to understand this epithalamion. In the court at Metz perhaps few but a minority of the bishops could have made anything of the sense ; and even to the ecclesiastical scholar the dialogue between Cupid and Venus, and the poetical similes and tropes of the verse, may have presented unusual difficulties.[5] In a second poem on the royal pair, a tribute is offered to the bride.

---

[1] *Ibid.*, 23. She describes Gregory as *devotus vir, Dei plenus*. In view of this emotion we feel some surprise that Gregory says so little of S. Radegund in his writings ; he must have been on terms of friendship with the queen.

[2] For a study of Brunhild, see G. Kurth, *Études franques* (1917), *Étude XI*.

[3] 'Fredegar's' *Chronicle* (p. 37), which, however, is generally hostile to this queen (cf. below, p. 71).

[4] *Carm.* vi. 2 : *De nuptiis Sigiberti regis et Brunichildis reginae.*

[5] Some of the phrases are adroitly turned ; Sigibert, who is styled, *alter Achilles*, is praised as a just and popular ruler :

Nubila nulla gravant populum sub rege sereno

. . . .

Solus amat cunctos e tamatur ab omnibus unus.

Brunhild, *altera nata Venus*, is the jewel of Spain : *novam genuit Hispania gemmam.*

It resembles that of Gregory in the History and both probably bear a close relation to facts.[1]

But this well educated and attractive princess had an element of recklessness in her character, revealed by her amazing marriage with her nephew Merovech, after Sigibert's murder. She was in dangerous straits, and may well have lost her perspicacity, for it is difficult to see how a marriage illegal in the eyes of the Church, and certain to infuriate the dangerous Fredegund, could in any way improve her prospects.[2] Her fortunate escape from a most serious peril perhaps taught her prudence, and after her return to her son's kingdom she did not allow her passing inclinations to interfere with her policy.[3] She had now two aims in life, to subdue the spirit of the Austrasian aristocracy, and to be revenged on Fredegund. In the prosecution of these aims she at first walked warily, biding her time, and only braving open opposition when her faithful adherents were threatened with destruction. Her chivalrous protection of Duke Lupus (p. 121) shows her as daring in a good cause; her announcement, on the death of Wandelen, that she intended herself to govern her son, betrays self-reliance and conscious strength. She was learning politics in a rude school (cf. IX. 9), but profited by the schooling. In dealing with the irritable and suspicious Guntram, she showed tact and restraint under frequent provocation, until the Pact of Andelot crowned her hopes (IX. 11 (20)). She had now become an accomplished politician; she remained the real ruler of Austrasia long after Childebert came of age, and started on a career of long-continued control which has seldom, if ever, been rivalled by other royal widows. Yet, for all her politics, she still retained a proud generosity, and much human feeling. She sent back unharmed to Neustria an assassin dispatched by Fredegund to take her life (VII. 20), a truly royal action. At the time of the aristocratic plot in 587, when her son's throne was seriously imperilled, she tried to save the life of Bertefried, one of the three ringleaders, because she had stood sponsor to his child (IX. 2). In the hazardous period of her career which began after King Guntram's death she showed steadfastness in misfortune, using the defeat at Droisi as an incentive to work for the later victory at Latifao.

---

[1] *Carm.* vi. 3: Brunhild is thus described:

Pulchra, modesta, decens, sollers, grata atque benigna,
Ingenio, vultu, nobilitate potens.

Gregory's words are: *Erat enim puella elegans opere, venusta aspectu, honesta moribus atque decora, prudens consilio et blanda conloquio* (IV. 20 (27)).

[2] It is true that bride and bridegroom were probably united in a common hatred of Fredegund, for that queen loathed her stepsons. But to anger Chilperic's queen at such a time gives proof of great rashness, even if Brunhild believed that Merovech had prospects (cf. Dill, as above, pp. 124–5).

[3] Though she does not seem to have enjoyed a reputation for reserve, Fredegar accuses her of many irregularities, but evidently had a bias against her. As noted on p. 55, Guntram charged her with desiring to marry Gundovald, or even one of his sons (IX. 28 (32)), but Guntram also disliked her, even accusing her of seeking his life. He, too, is no trustworthy witness.

That moment when endurance under adversity reaped its reward was the climax of her career. But the seeds of degeneration were already sown. She had come to worship power, and is accused of having stooped low in order to retain it. Her imperious temperament was no longer kept under control; it made for her powerful enemies, and caused her expulsion from Austrasia (p. 138). Her elder grandson now escaped from her tutelage, but to keep the younger in subordination she appears to have prevented his marriage, encouraging the licentious side of his character that no lawful queen might become her rival. For this she was boldly rebuked by Desiderius, of Vienne, a saintly and most courageous bishop; but she took his words in a revengeful spirit, and before long he was stoned to death, while Columban, who boldly courted the same fate, was banished from the country. At an earlier time she had persuaded Theudebert to marry Bilichild, a girl whom she believed to be wholly under her influence; but in that case she had miscalculated her power, and the failure had induced her to adopt worse methods.[1] It is not easy to recognize in this hard and relentless woman who begins to recall the terrible Olympias, queen of Philip of Macedon, the Brunhild known to Gregory and Fortunatus. It is strange to remember that this was the personage addressed by Pope Gregory the Great as *dilectissima filia*,[1] when in 590 he wrote asking her countenance for the mission of Augustine to Kent during its passage through Gaul. We do not know how she bore herself when, after Theuderic's death, having endured misfortune after misfortune, she was at last brought a helpless prisoner into the presence of Lothar II. But unless her whole nature was changed we may imagine that to the last she defied the son of Fredegund, endured with unbroken spirit the humiliations she had to suffer, and went with fortitude to a terrible death (p. 134).

---

[1] 'Fredegar's' *Chronicle* is the chief authority for these events, and, next to it, the Life of Columban. It must be remembered that the *Chronicle* was written in Burgundy, where Brunhild's latest years were passed. We cannot but observe that the writers (p. 37), with the advantage of local knowledge and tradition, believe the worst of the queen; but in forming our judgement we must not forget that local knowledge is often coloured by local prejudice. We are told that in 599, while still in Austrasia, she prompted the murder of Duke Wintrio because he opposed her political ideals; that in Burgundy she was responsible for the death of the patrician Aegilan 'from no other motive than cupidity, since she coveted his property for the royal domain'; that she was the mistress of the Gallo-Roman Protadius, who was the instrument of her political schemes and arranged the death of Bertwald, the mayor of the household, that her favourite might succeed to his office; that in 609 she and Protadius incited Theuderic to march on his brother Theudebert, whom she declared to be illegitimate; that when the army, objecting to the war,

We may suspect bias in the uniformly evil character given to Brunhild in the pages of 'Fredegar', even though the chronicle which goes by that name is usually a trustworthy source. Probably 'the Visigothic woman' was as unpopular in Burgundy as in Austrasia. Brunhild, like her mother Goiswinth or Godeswinth, from whom she may well have derived many of her qualities, was a *maîtresse femme*, displaying in her narrower environment some of the qualities which distinguished Catherine the Great. There was a hardness in the mother which we seem to recognize in many acts of the daughter; there was also insight into policy, and the sagacity which comes of experience in public affairs.[2] Brunhild reacted to her environment with inherited virtues and defects. Later Frankish history shows another queen with some of her qualities: Plectrude, wife of Pepin of Héristal (d. 715). Persons

---

murdered Protadius in the royal tent as he was dicing with the king's doctor, she revenged herself on the ringleader by having his feet cut off, and reducing him to beggary. As Kurth has urged, such charges may well have been exaggerated by aristocratic influence.

[1] Brunhild had built churches and founded monasteries. But as Oman remarks of her: 'Sincere piety was not in those days, any more than in our own, inconsistent with a headstrong impatience of opposition, and an unscrupulous readiness to sweep obstacles out of the way' (*The Dark Ages*, 6th ed. (1923), p. 175).

[2] In V. 28 (38) we see Godeswinth handling her daughter-in-law Ingund very roughly, because she would not abandon her Catholicism. In IX. 1 we learn a finer side of her character, displayed when she placed her practical wisdom at the disposal of her stepson Recared, who knew how to value it: *foedus iniit cum Gesintha, relicta patris sui, eamque ut matrem suscepit. Denique, cum noverca habito consilio, legatos ad Gunthramnum regem atque ad Childebertum dirigit, dicens: 'Pacem habete nobiscum'* . . .

of this type are not loved, but they can be admired, and after their death they are remembered, often by some surviving monument long connected with their names. The memory of Brunhild was perpetuated by the association of her name with Roman roads which she had restored. To this day certain high roads in Belgium are called *Chaussées de Brunehaute* and perhaps there could be no better memorial to one who sought to re-establish Roman order in a country and an age distracted by lawlessness and confusion.[1]

Queen Fredegund.

While Brunhild, brought up in relative refinement, lived in a kingdom where the Teutonic element was predominant, and the rude Frankish aristocracy chafed under the pretensions of the ruling house, Fredegund, a wholly barbaric nature, had her home where Gallo-Roman civilization had left more visible traces, and the Salian Franks were traditionally loyal to the descendants of Clovis. Hers was therefore the easier lot. The Neustrian throne was less visibly assailed, and she had but herself to rule an uxorious king in order to exert a dominant influence over his government. After his death she combined with feminine arts a real experience of affairs; she was thus able to cozen and thwart King Guntram, and to meet her rival Brunhild on equal terms. Her cleverness won her the allegiance of the Neustrian aristocracy; her successes made her subjects almost forget her crimes. When she died, after a victory to which her vigilance had contributed, she left to posterity a legendary name.

The story of her rise, not told by Gregory, is related in the *Gesta Francorum*;[2] it must be read with caution, but it accords well enough with her character as revealed by undoubted actions in her life. She was a palace servant, who attracted the king's favour, and determined to supplant her mistress, Queen Audovera, succeeding by a disloyal trick. The story ran that an infant daughter had been born to Chilperic during his absence from home, and was to be baptized before his return. Fredegund had discovered that the Church forbade the mother herself to receive the infant from the font, thus combining the duties of mother and godmother. Assuming that Audovera, probably a simple woman, knew nothing of this rule, she so arranged that no godmother appeared. Thereupon she persuaded Audovera herself to take the child after it had been baptized. As soon as the king came home she saw to it that the matter was reported to him. Chilperic, delighted to find a pretext for dismissing Audovera, posed as one shocked at a serious irregularity, and dismissed his consort in order to set Fredegund in her place.[1] The infatuation of Chilperic was only to be expected; he was brought up to the habit of gratifying all his desires, and Fredegund was one who used men as the instruments not only of her passions, but of her ambitions; they were so many pawns for the furtherance of her schemes. Chilperic was so enslaved that years afterwards he even surrendered his son Chlodovech to this most merciless of stepmothers, at a time when he must have known that the action meant the young prince's certain death (pp. 64, 120). Men like Leudast, count of Tours, were her willing serfs (V. 8). She beguiled even her elderly brother-in-law Guntram, who for a short time refused to hear anything against her, and liked to see her at his table (56).[2]

---

[1] Brunhild, like Ebroin long afterwards, fought for more than order; she aimed at absolutism, and her success was impossible. As Kurth has said (*Études franques*, No. XI), the future belonged to the more constitutional monarchy established by the descendants of Arnulf and Pepin.

[2] Chapter 31.

The strength of Fredegund lay largely in the untamed wildness of her nature: *elle puisait sa force dans la profondeur de sa barbarie.*[3] Hers was a wickedness so elemental that we feel horror at the blank absence of honour, mercy, and the finer feelings. She moves before us like some primitive creature beyond the pale of the moral law, and full of cruel instincts. She was the more dangerous through the fascination by which she cast a spell over men. She could always find a human instrument ready to commit for her the most inhuman crimes. Time after time appear the devoted assassins, prepared to risk their own lives in her service (IV. 36 (51) ; VII. 20 ; VIII. 44 ; X. 18). Did the emissary show signs of weakness ? She braced him on the spot with a potion, and provided him with a second dose to be used at the moment of action (VIII. 29). Did he fear that his blow might fail ? She was ready with poisoned unguent for his dagger.[1] The number of persons whose violent deaths lay to the account of Fredegund must have been very large. It was so commonly her practice to order the torture and mutilation of ordinary persons that a high proportion of such victims must certainly have succumbed ; we cannot guess their number. The recorded instance of Gailen, the trusty servant of Prince Merovech, must be but one example among many ; her methods in these cases were those of savage Africa. Of notable personalities we have a fairly accurate tally. King Childebert may not have exaggerated when he formally accused her of putting to death five of his own kinsfolk.[2] Among persons of mark, other than those of royal estate, whom she sent out of the world, were Praetextatus, bishop of Rouen, stabbed in his own cathedral at Easter during mass (VIII. 31),[3] and an old Frankish landowner who dared to protest against this foul deed, and for doing so was poisoned by a stirrup-cup which he was incautious enough to drink (*ibid.*). On the same occasion, Leudovald, bishop of Bayeux, was only saved from her emissaries by the vigilance of his friends (VIII. 31). These are instances in which the planned crime was successfully carried out. But in addition there were many deliberate attempts to kill, which were none the less wicked because they failed of success. One of these she made with her own hands, almost achieving the murder of her own daughter Rigunth (see below, p. 78). Besides repeated failures to kill Brunhild, Childebert, and Guntram (VII. 19; VIII. 44; X. 18), she abetted the murder of Eberulf, when in sanctuary at Tours (VII. 26). It seems unlikely that she was responsible for the murder of her husband Chilperic, as the story in the *Gesta Francorum* would have us believe (p. 122); she had far too much to lose by his death. Her greatest success as organizer of assassination, if, as seems more probable than not, she was the prompter, was the removal of Sigibert in the hour of his triumph over her country. If the murderers were really sent out by her, it may fairly be claimed that few instigators of murder have achieved more at a single stroke. Chilperic's kingdom seemed lost beyond recovery; it was instantly saved by the deed, in the preparation of which Gregory says that she was 'mindful of her arts'.[1] It was well for her that Guntram refused to surrender her to Childebert, when the young king was reckoning up the number of her royal victims; queens who adventured into politics were not always granted immunity, witness Brunhild's end (p. 134); while poisoners and reputed sorcerers have in all ages drawn upon their heads the most savage punishments: even in the eighteenth century, the Marquise de Brinvilliers was put to the torture, 'ordinary and extraordinary', before being beheaded. The adventuress who had deprived Childebert of a father and Brunhild of a husband and a sister, would probably have met no easier a fate at the hands of Sigibert's heir than Brunhild herself incurred at the hands of Lothar II.

---

[1] The unfortunate queen was then confined in a nunnery, where her ex-servant finally had her done to death (V. 29 (39)).

[2] It was this deliberate seductiveness that roused the disdain of Ronsard, who in his *Franciade* included the story of the Merovingian age probably derived by him from the *Gesta Francorum*. His sense of the fitness of things revolted at the thought of a lewd and crafty serving-wench throning as 'queen of France' and making a king her puppet. He lashed without mercy 'the trollop Fredegund' (*la garse Frédégonde*):

Qui d'un visage eshonté de regars
Et de maintiens lubriques et paillars

. . . .

Fera ce roy de maistre son esclave,
L'abestissant si bien à ses désirs
Qu'il servira valet de ses plaisirs,
Puis doit apprendre aux despens de sa vie
Que l'homme est fol qui aux putains se fie.

(Bk. IV, 161 ff., ed. P. Laumonier, vol. iii.) The strokes are not undeserved; but we have already seen that there was more than *paillardise* in the character of this queen.

[3] H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, II. 51.

---

[1] This refinement in crime is paralleled by cases in Anglo-Saxon history (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* ii, ch. 9) ; II. 9 ; VII. 7, 14.

[2] His father Sigibert ; his aunt Galswinth ; his two cousins, Merovech and Clovis ; and either Queen Audovera, or his uncle Chilperic. Childebert roundly denounced her as *malefica*, or witch : *per quam multi reges* (persons of royal blood) *interfecti sunt* (VII. 14) ; the charge is confirmed by her known practising with potions, by her evident belief that others were laying spells against her son (VI. 25 (35)) ; and by the way in which a ‘ prophetess ’, for whom Guntram's kingdom had grown uncomfortable, sought Fredegund as her obvious protector (VII. 43 (44)).

[3] Her visit to his bedside, offering the assistance of her own skilled physicians, seems to have been a refinement of malice, for she never showed a tender heart for any but her own children.

It may be that to her contemporaries some of the more creditable qualities manifested in her later life were visible even in these earlier days; if so, they may somewhat, if never wholly, excuse the panegyric of Fortunatus in the poem addressed to Chilperic after the Council at Berny (V. 49) which acquitted Gregory of having slandered the queen. The poet goes too far, even as a conventional panegyrist, when he presents Fredegund as the model queen excelling in all merits, one whose conduct adorned the realm, a woman prudent, generous, and acute, shedding light from her countenance like the sun.[1] These praises are surely applied with too broad a brush. But 'useful to the court' she assuredly was, and in that competence may possibly have lain some germs of patriotism however narrow. If Fortunatus can be defended at all, it must be on the ground of such prevision. In his list of virtues the poet does not insist upon the one quality which lent power and consistence to her character: the almost animal devotion to her offspring. Some of her worst crimes were committed to remove rivals from their path, or to avenge their deaths. But the instinctive and physical nature of her mother-love compels us to deny it a high ethical value. When her passion was aroused she was in fact a wild creature; when her children were taken from her she was worse than a tigress reft of her cubs. Yet, even with these reservations, we cannot but feel the human touch in her action when, after the death of her young son Theuderic, she took the boy's possessions, his clothes of fur and silk, and other costly things, and had them all destroyed.[2] His silver and gold ornaments she caused to be melted down in a furnace 'that nothing might remain to recall to memory the son for whom she mourned' (VI. 25 (35)). This act moves us more than her frenzied burning of the tax-registers, when her fears for her children awakened a flicker of compunction for past misdeeds, to be at once forgotten when the experiment in goodness failed in its object (V. 20 (34)). For the safety and the interests of her young children she was in truth ready to spend herself to the last,[3] and in the case of her only surviving son, Lothar II, her efforts were successful.[4] Her affection for her daughters seems to have been less intense, at any rate after they had grown up. It was to be expected that a nature like hers would ill brook the opposition of a turbulent daughter, undisciplined, and embittered by the failure of a matrimonial project; the manner in which she attempted to rid herself of the annoyance was characteristic (IX. 34). The mother and daughter had reached the stage of personal violence (*ut interdum pugnis se alapisque caederent*). At last Fredegund devised a plan for making an end. She bade her daughter be gone, but first took her to the treasure-chamber on the pretext of giving her a share of the treasure left by Chilperic. Opening a great chest of precious things she began handing them out to Rigunth until she professed weariness, and bade the girl help herself. The princess was bending over the chest to make her choice when Fredegund slammed the heavy lid down upon the back of her neck, and pressed upon it;[1] the noise, however, attracted the attention of a maid, and assistance came just in time. Quarrelling continued between the queen and her daughter, who now abandoned herself without restraint to loose living.

---

[1] *Memor artium suarum* (IV. 36 (51)).

---

[1] *Carm.* ix. 1:

Coniuge cum propria quae regnum moribus ornat

. . . .

Provida consiliis, sollers, cauta, utilis aulae,
Ingenio pollens, munera larga placens.
Omnibus excellens meritis Fredegundis opima,
Atque serena suo fulget ab ore dies.

[2] It is stated that they filled four carts, a striking testimony to the profusion of domestic life in a Merovingian royal house.

[3] Though she basely abandoned Samson (V. 15 (22)).

[4] For him she lived the life of a politician, successfully embarrassing Guntram by stirring up intrigues against him; and secretly supporting his enemies. She plotted with Austrasian notables, with Visigoths, with Bretons (VIII.

In the address with which she defended the interests of her son, Fredegund excelled her rival Brunhild, dying successful through the boldness which sets all upon the hazard for the desired end. This struggle for the boy Lothar and his rights revealed her strong in her single loyalty. Her motive in rallying Neustrian patriotism may have been less national than domestic, but the success which she achieved proves her power of kindling and keeping the enthusiasm of men. Base born as she was, she stood in their eyes for the dominion of the Salian Franks. As the leader of a whole country, she gathered about her even dignitaries of the Church which she and Chilperic had outraged; many of them became her supporters in despite of themselves. When Guntram sent her into a half-banishment at Rueil, bishops accompanied her, joining the notables in protestations of loyalty (VII. 19). When she was compelled to prove by compurgation that the young Lothar

---

28, 33; X. 10). She even tried to bring the Pretender Gundovald to her court, and might have succeeded had not her messengers been sent too late (VII. 39).

[1] *Adprehenso mater operturio archae, super cervicem eius inlisit. Quod cum fortitudine premeret atque gulam axis inferior ita adtereret ut etiam oculi ad crepandum parati essent, exclamavit una puellarum*, &c.

was in truth Chilperic's son, three bishops and three hundred laymen appeared in her support (VIII. 9). She had always devoted friends. In 591 she quelled a blood-feud at Tournai by a terrible act of 'Jeddart justice' which led the relatives of the victims to plot her betrayal into the hands of Childebert; but her adherents at once hurried her away into safety (X. 27). After the murder of Praetextatus, which was enough to alienate even the most faithful, neither the bishop of Bayeux, immediately after the crime, nor the commissioners sent later by Guntram, could obtain any evidence against her. The governors (*nutritores*) of the young Lothar went so far as to send the king a message practically bidding him mind his own business (VIII. 31).

It is an instance of the irony of history that Fredegund ended her unabashed life in peace in a royal *villa*, and at the height of her success, while her nobler rival, defeated in all her aims, insulted and reviled, was dragged to a cruel death at a horse's tail; that the son of Fredegund, and his son after him, both reigned as sole kings in France, while the son and grandsons of Brunhild died young, yielding their heritage to the offspring of her enemy. While the daughter of King Athanagild had not even a grave, the base-born Fredegund was laid in state in the church of S. Vincent at Paris,[1] her tomb being ultimately removed to Saint-Denis, where it still remains.[2] In modern times there have also been found those for whom the achievement of Fredegund in keeping Neustrian hopes alive through very evil days outweigh much of her wickedness. To these she is the patriot and heroine, disgusted with the military inefficacy of Chilperic, and turning to Landeric as the one strong man able to save the home of the Salian Franks. With her ardent mother-love and cold ferocity, her superstition and sacrilege, her far sight and her blind impulses, she presents a figure in history which compels the interest of every reader. She was ignorant; but she had an instinct for action on the grand scale. Fate placed her on the narrow stage of a barbaric kingdom. The reader who, laying down the History, feels glad that she was denied the wider scope, pays her memory an unconscious homage. She was a daemonic force; she did consistent evil; but she never ceased to be of moment to the world in which she lived. Gregory describes her as 'the enemy of God and man', and not without insight, for assuredly she was no unequal mate for the Nero and Herod of her age (p. 63). As he may be compared to evil kings, so she to wicked queens: to Laodice, consort of Antiochus Theos; to Parysatis and Amestris, fierce Persian queens; to Medea; to Lady Macbeth. But each of these lacks something that she has, or has something that she lacks,[1] No single parallel unites in her person the qualities which give her so notable a place among the wicked women of history.

---

[1] Afterwards Saint-Germain-des-Prés (vol. ii, p. 512).

[2] Ruinart (Appendix, col. 1370) describes the royal tombs in Saint-Germain-des-Prés as they were before the French Revolution, giving an illustration of Fredegund's tombstone, which can hardly have been that originally placed over her remains.

The other Merovingian royal ladies may be dismissed in a few words. Among those with a good name were Clotild queen of Clovis, Radegund, queen of Lothar I, and Ingoberg, widow of Charibert, a woman given to all good works. Clotild had a high reputation for piety, living after her lord's death an almost monastic life at Tours. But she had not shaken herself free from the savage custom of vendetta; the story of her deliberate incitement of her sons to blood-revenge against the Burgundian royal house shows that although she converted Clovis, she was but an imperfect Christian. Radegund's life has been already described on another page as that of the one blameless character among these queens of whom we have any intimate knowledge (p. 67). Galswinth, sister of Brunhild and queen of Chilperic for a short space, is a tragic figure drawn in outline, of whom we know little save for a few facts given by Fortunatus (*Carm.* vi. 7). Of Audovera, Chilperic's first queen, we know even less; Theudechild, last queen of

---

[1] For example, Medea has the sorceries, but lacks the mother-love; Lady Macbeth has the ruthlessness, but not the seductive charm. If Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, borrowed from the *Gesta Francorum* (ch. 36) the ruse attributed to Fredegund's quick wit at Droisi, when she bade the army advance carrying branches, he may also have borrowed some of her attributes to fill out the character of Lady Macbeth; but if so, he abstained from making the resemblance very close. The character of Laodice was of the same type as that of Fredegund. This queen of Syria, put away by Antiochus for Berenice, princess of Egypt, was taken back to favour, and caused her son to order the murder of her rival, having previously herself poisoned her husband to ensure the rights of her sons. But perhaps, if we knew more of the Persian queens, they would be found most nearly akin to Fredegund in vindictiveness and unswerving hate.

Charibert, appears merely a foil to Guntram's malice (IV. 19 (26)). Two bad queens may be mentioned. Deuteria, a Gallo-Roman lady who forced herself on Theudebert's notice and induced him to marry her, feared that her young daughter might attract her husband; she put the girl in an ox-cart, which was then driven over a bridge (III. 26). Austrechild, Guntram's second queen, was a hateful person, if there is truth in Gregory's account of her conduct upon her death-bed. 'Before she breathed out her evil soul' (*priusquam nequam spiritum exalaret*), she made the king promise that the doctors who had failed to preserve her life should not survive her (V. 27 (35)).

d. Other personages.

Fortunatus, the chief representative of literature in Gaul during the period of Gregory's active life, receives the barest notice in his works, and is but incidentally mentioned in the History, though certainly well known to him.[1] As no survey of the chief contemporary personalities would be complete without him, it will be well to give in the present place the principal facts relating to his life and activities; these fill a gap of which the silence of Gregory leaves us sensible.

Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus was born about 530 near Treviso in Italy.[2] He did not acquire the education or the literary attainments for which he became celebrated until he was nearly thirty years of age, when he went to study at Ravenna. This city, the last Roman capital, and the residence of the Ostrogothic kings, had been taken by Belisarius in 539, and was maintained under Byzantine rule as a centre of literary culture, possessing important schools which followed the old Roman system of education. The training which Fortunatus received from the grammarians and teachers of rhetoric at Ravenna imbued him with the spirit of late Latin literature;[3] it was here that he learned the tags and commonplaces of versification, the threadbare tropes and metaphors, the facile phrases which characterize so many of his poetical works, and justify the epithet of *scholasticissimus*, later applied to him by Hilduin, abbot of Saint-Denis. His sight becoming affected, perhaps as the result of overstudy, he visited the basilica of S. John and S. Paul at Ravenna, and after anointing his eyes with oil from the lamp burning before the altar of S. Martin in that church, found his vision miraculously restored. This cure prompted a journey to Gaul that he might pay his devotion at S. Martin's tomb in the famous church at Tours.[1] He undertook it in 564 or 565, not long before the invasion of Italy by the Lombards, crossing the Noric Alps into Austrasia, where he was present at the marriage of Sigibert and Brunhild in 566.[2] After he had fulfilled his purpose by visiting Tours, Fortunatus went to Poitiers at the desire of Radegund,[3] and remained for the rest of his life, finding there the tranquil existence which suited his studious, but sociable and friendly temperament. As in 568 the Lombards had invaded Italy, he probably felt little inclination to return to a Ravenna environed by a new tide of barbarism. He was now a priest,[4] and in that capacity was able the better to serve his patroness and her monastery. He seems to have become the practical adviser of Radegund, and to have been sent by her as her representative to various parts of the country; his frequent journeys, during which he met many important persons, princes, bishops and administrators, were probably undertaken for other objects than his own pleasure.[5] He visited Gregory at Tours by invitation, corresponded with him, and received many gifts at his hands (p. 84). He was everywhere welcome, as the most noted man of letters in the country, doubtless also as the possessor of social gifts and a higher culture than that to be found in the courts of the Merovingian princes. He lived on contentedly at Poitiers, enjoying the friendship of Radegund, and after her death was still interested in the welfare of her monastery, which he saw distracted by the deplorable riot described by Gregory (pp. 360 ff.); two short metrical letters (*Carm.* viii. 16, 17) show how deep was his concern. At the end of his life he succeeded Plato as bishop of that diocese, but died about a year after his election. Like Gregory, he was canonized after his death.[1]

---

[1] Fortunatus may have been so treated by Gregory because he took no decisive part in public life, had no renown as a miracle-worker, and was not a prominent figure in ecclesiastical history.

[2] The best edition of his works is in M. G. H., *Auct. Antiquiss.* iv, edited by F. Leo.

[3] Paul the Deacon (*Hist. Lang.* ii. 13) says of him: *in arte grammatica sive rhetorica, seu etiam metrica clarissimus exstitit.* But Fortunatus makes many blunders. His mistakes are often as bad as those of Gregory, who had not frequented the schools (M. Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours*, p. 84).

---

[1] The above facts are related by him in his metrical *Vita S. Martini*.

[2] Celebrated by him in his poem *De nuptiis Sigiberti regis, Brunichildis reginae* (*Carm.* vi. 2).

[3] *Voto Radegundis adhaesi* (*Carm.* viii. 1).

[4] It is not known at what time he entered the Church; he may have done so before leaving Italy, though it is perhaps more likely that he was ordained in Gaul. Gregory alludes to him as *Fortunatus presbyter*, or *presbyter italicus*.

[5] These journeys are often mentioned in his poems. He met S. Germanus of Paris, who had consecrated the Abbess Agnes (*Carm.* viii. 2); the bishops Felix of Nantes, Leontius of Bordeaux, Nicetius of Trèves, Martinus of Galicia (*Carm.* v. 1 and 2), Avitus of Clermont, and Gregory himself. Revisiting the Austrasian court, he learned to know the young Childebert, as he had known that prince's father, Sigibert, and renewed his earlier acquaintance with Brunhild. He also met the powerful laymen Gogo, Mummolen, Lupus, Magnulf, Chrodin, Mummolus, Guntram Boso. He found his way to Chilperic's court, and was in favour both with that king and with Queen Fredegund. But it is curious that he seems to have had little or no intercourse with King Guntram, as a rule the easiest to meet of all the Merovingian kings.

It will be well to mention the passages in Fortunatus illustrating his relations with Gregory. The preface to the first book of his poems informs us that their publication was due to Gregory's request.[2] *Carm.* v. 3 is a poem addressed to the citizens of Tours, congratulating them on the arrival of Gregory as bishop in their midst. The fifth poem in the same book is written, again at Gregory's prompting, in praise of Avitus, bishop of Clermont, for converting five hundred Jews (cf. V. 11).[3] In *Carm.* viii. 16 and 17 Fortunatus, writing in connexion with the nuns' riot, implores Gregory to stand by his own niece Justina, now abbess, and not to forget the memory of Radegund. In v. 17 he invokes Gregory's aid on behalf of a girl abducted from Poitiers. In ix. 6 he acknowledges a letter in which Gregory demands of him a Sapphic ode, but declares that this cannot be done until the harvest of his small field is got in. In ix. 7 he sends the ode, with his own greetings, and those of Radegund, Agnes, and Justina. Other metrical letters to Gregory are very short; they are expressions of greeting or of thanks for gifts or kind actions,[1] and in several of them he sends Gregory the greetings of Radegund and Agnes. The language used towards Gregory is very deferential. The bishop is *Specimen pietatis opimae.* He is addressed as *Dulcis opime, decus nostrum, pie papa Gregori*; *Dulcis care, decens, facunde, benigne Gregori Atque pater patriae.* The bishop's very letters have a healing power: *Venit ad aegrotum medici vox alma Gregori.* He is eloquent; he is *florens in studiis* (cf. p. 22). The writer himself is his most obedient, humble servant, *famulus subactus.* He throws himself at Gregory's feet: *Me Fortunatum tibi celso sterno pusillum.* He submissively commends himself to his patron: *Me Fortunatum humilem commendo patrono.* On the whole, we gather from the various poems that the relations of the two men were more intimate than we should infer from terse allusions to 'the priest Fortunatus', or 'the Italian priest'.

---

[1] He was not bishop during Gregory's lifetime, but the nun Baudonivia, in the prologue to the second book of her Life of Radegund (p. 67), definitely styles him bishop; he must therefore have followed Plato, the successor of Maroveus; Paul the Deacon also calls him bishop (*Hist. Lang.* ii. 13). The chief sources for the life of Fortunatus are his own poems, with complementary facts from Paul the Deacon and Baudonivia. For works relating to him, see A. Molinier, *Les sources de l'hist. de France* (1901), pp. 74–5, and U. Chevalier, *Rép. des sources hist. du moyen âge; Bio-biogr.*, s. v. *Fortunat.*

[2] *Hortaris sedulo ut contra pudorem meum deducar in publicum.*

[3] A few lines may be quoted to illustrate the poet's treatment of the theme:

Christicolis Iudaeus odor resilebat amarus.

. . . .

Avitus is made to address the Jewish community as follows:

Aut admitte preces, aut, rogo, cede loco.
Vis hic nulla premit, quovis te collige liber,
Aut meus esto sequax, aut tuus esto fugax.
Redde, colone, locum, tua duc contagia tecum.

Many metrical letters of Fortunatus to Radegund and the abbess Agnes are preserved in his works;[2] they reveal a pleasing intercourse between friends, alluding to gifts of flowers, chestnuts and various small presents, or sending thanks for dainties and entertainment provided by the two ladies (cf. p. 445). But others are of a more serious character, expressing his desire to serve them, and his hope for their welfare in this world and the next. In one (*Carm.* xi. 7) he utters the wish that Radegund, Agnes, and he himself may all die on the same day.

Fortunatus appears as a kindly, if perhaps a rather ease-loving personality. He liked the little dinners provided for him by Radegund and Agnes; he liked the apples sent him by Gregory. He found it pleasant to be the confidential friend of Radegund, whose education no doubt enabled her to talk with him on a variety of subjects, perhaps even including poetry. But there was a graver side to his nature, shown not only by the above-mentioned appeal to Gregory when, after the death of Radegund, the whole reputation of her monastery was threatened by gross disorders, but by his religious writings and notably by his hymns. The worst feature of an amiable character was the readiness to write panegyrics of exceedingly wicked people. This was a weakness which seems to have beset many late-Roman writers. The panegyric was an established form of poem, and custom willed that it should be thoroughgoing. It was doubtless well understood that the praise was always in excess of the desert; official encomium was a temptation, to which many an estimable man before Fortunatus had succumbed, including Sidonius. But modern feeling no longer tolerates grossly perverted praise; and it may be suspected that the poet's eulogy of Chilperic and Fredegund revolted many even of his own contemporaries. Nevertheless, despite his flatteries and his inflated eulogies, Fortunatus is not wholly negligible as a writer. His elegy on the death of the murdered Queen Galswinth shows genuine feeling. The greatest of his hymns[1] are still sung to-day; the strange and arresting quality of their language, their strong and simple emotion, make us marvel that their author was content to pour out so many lifeless and insipid hexameters on so many uninspiring themes, apparently resting upon these his claim to lasting reputation.

---

[1] *Carm.* v. 4 (a birthday greeting), v. 9 (congratulating Gregory on his safe return to Tours after a journey), v. 11 (thanking for *carmina diva,* lent by the bishop), v. 12 (thanking for an invitation to Tours), v. 13, 14 (announcing his safe return to Poitiers after a visit to Tours), v. 15, 16 (thanking for a present of apples, in which occur the following characteristic lines:

Det Deus omnipotens, meritorum fruge repletus
Mala legas avide quae Paradisus habet.

viii. 15 (regretting inability, through sickness, to accept an invitation to Tours), viii. 19 (addressing Gregory as *lumen generale*), viii. 20, 23, 24, and 25 (thanking him for giving him the use of some land on the Vienne), viii. 26 (acknowledging a gift of white skins for making boots).

[2] *Carm.* viii. 9–14; xi. 2–29.

The History presents many lesser personalities, bad and good laymen and clerics, who pass and repass upon the scene, many of them interesting not only to the student of the Dark Ages, but to those who study human nature from the point of view of heredity and the influence of environment. Some are vividly portrayed, as Duke Rauching, the master brute (V. 3; VIII. 24(26); IX. 9), Eulalius, count of Clermont; and Leudast, count of Tours, a thorn in Gregory's side (V. 47; VI. 23 (32)).

---

[1] E.g. *Vexilla Regis prodeunt* (*Carm.* ii. 7); and *Pange lingua glorios praelium certaminis* (*ibid.* ii. 2).

In addition may be mentioned the loyal Duke Lupus, a rare example of virtue among evil men (IX. 11); Mummolus, successful commander, but traitor and false friend (IV. 29 (42), 31 (45); VI. 1, 18 (26); VII. 10, 39); Duke Desiderius, the double deserter (V. 29 (39); VI. 7 (12); VII. 9, 34; VIII. 27 (45)); Eberulf, whose one decent action was his flouting of Fredegund (VII. 21), but who for the rest deserved the bombastic threat of Guntram (p. 54), and presents a repulsive example of the unbridled Frankish notable (VII. 22, 26 (29)); the treacherous Aregisil (III. 14); Munderic the vainglorious (III. 14); the hateful Beppolen (VIII. 42). These are but examples of the types which make the picture of Merovingian life. The picture is a dark one; all that can be said to relieve the darkness is that in history the villains are apt to attract the recorder's eye; the good and the indifferent are less salient figures and thus receive less frequent notice.

Among ecclesiastics, as among laymen, the evil again outnumber the rest, and for the same reason; the proportion is probably higher in the book than in real life.

Germanus, bishop of Paris, had all the virtues of a bishop, including boldness in the cause of good; he dared to excommunicate one king (IV. 19 (26)) and to threaten another with death (IV. 36 (51)). Theodore, bishop of Marseilles, *vir egregiae sanctitatis* (VIII. 12), was simple and incautious, for which defects he was cast into prison by King Guntram (VIII. 12); but when the plague visited his city, he remained at his post through the whole period of the outbreak (IX. 22). Ageric, bishop of Verdun, was known for his kind heart, giving shelter to dangerous political refugees (IX, 12), and taking under his protection the orphan sons of the most violent among them. Leuvald, bishop of Bayeux, after the murder of Praetextatus, dared to withstand Queen Fredegund and her assassins (VIII. 31). Magnulf of Toulouse bearded the formidable supporters of Gundovald (VII. 28 (27)). Among political bishops, the chief figure is the subtle intriguer Egidius of Reims, a subject of Childebert, but ever plotting against the Crown in the interests of the aristocratic party (VI. 3; IX. 14), sometimes treating even with the national enemy, Chilperic, for which on one occasion he had to gallop for his life amid a shower of stones, his boot coming off as he rode away (VI. 22 (31)).

For this treason he had to endure rough words and an ignominious exit when on an embassy to Guntram (VII. 14); but still he plotted on until even a council of his peers found him guilty, and expelled him from his see (X. 19). Other episcopal politicians were Bertram of Bordeaux and Palladius of Saintes. Bertram was a connexion of the royal house, and made himself the satellite of Chilperic, working with him for the condemnation of Bishop Praetextatus (V. 12 (18)). He supported the pretender Gundovald against Guntram (VII. 31), and was openly charged with the offence by that king (VIII. 22), who on another occasion hotly rebuked him (IX. 33). Palladius abetted Bertram in the Gundovaldian affair; for consecrating a bishop of Aix in the pretender's name, and at Bertram's instigation, he shared with the latter the poetic justice of the sentence passed upon both by an episcopal council at Mâcon (VIII. 20). In a most unedifying passage, we see the two bishops openly at loggerheads, exchanging most unclerical abuse, and seeking to bring discredit on each other (VIII. 7, 22). After Bertram's death Palladius was suspected of furthering Fredegund's intrigues with Spain (VIII. 43). Praetextatus of Rouen dangerously entangled himself in politics, rather perhaps from lack of practical wisdom than from love of intrigue. His action in celebrating the illegal marriage of Prince Merovech and the widowed Queen Brunhild brought him into serious peril through the fierce resentment of Fredegund, who secured his exile, and ultimately had him murdered in his own church (VIII. 31); to be involved in Merovingian politics was not safe even for bishops. In Cato, the man of inflated pride, good in the end overcame evil (IV. 11, 24 (31)).

Among thoroughly bad churchmen in high place are the two 'fighting bishops', Salonius and Sagittarius, who took the field in arms, and passed their time in gluttony, in wantonness, and in drunken slumber (V. 20). A less athletic man of like sensuality was the bestial Droctegisil, bishop of Soissons, *vorax cibi ac vini* (IX. 37), of whom we can only read with disgust. The same feeling is excited by Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans (VIII. 39), by Cautinus of Clermont in his later years (IV. 12), and by the abbot Dagulf (VIII. 19).

The student of Merovingian society, depressed by the prominence given by Gregory to evil, may find some consolation in the pages of Fortunatus. Though it is necessary to discount many of his optimistic or flattering judgements, we glean from his works much intimate knowledge of contemporary life, and this is sometimes of a reassuring character. For example, Gregory just mentions Gogo the Austrasian who had been governor of King Childebert. But from Fortunatus we learn that he was a charming and estimable man, and a worthy friend of Duke Lupus.[1] After the dark outlines of Merovingian notables sketched by Gregory, it is pleasant to read the verses in which Fortunatus describes these two magnates planning good works together.[2] Nor was Gogo the only person in great place to whom Fortunatus ascribes a care for other things than the satisfaction of his own desires.

Among the players of minor parts in the drama of sixth-century life, we may note the intriguing Gallo-Roman Arcadius, unworthy grandson of Sidonius (III. 9, 18), Claudius, the degraded assassin of the same race (VII. 26 (29)), and Aridius, who combined cleverness with loyalty (II. 23 (32)); adventurers, like Andarchius (IV. 32 (46)); brave women, like Gregory's niece Justina, the prioress of the nunnery at Poitiers (X. 15), and the unnamed Frankish Judith (IX. 27); brave boys like the gallant nephew of Chundo, who fought in a trial by battle (X. 10) in his uncle's stead, killing his adversary and losing his own life; trusty servants like Leo (III. 15), fishermen, quacks, 'antichrists', prophetesses, all the secondary figures, in their entrances and exits, whom it is impossible to mention here. Any one who has the patience to search the History for such will be rewarded for his toil by the discovery of many a marked human type.

---

[1] *Carm.* vii. 1–4.

[2] *Ibid.* vii. 4, 27–32:

An cum dulce Lupo pietatis iura retractat,
Consilioque pari mitia mella creant
Quo pascatur inops, viduae solatia praestent,
Parvus tutorem sumat, egenus opem,
Quicquid agunt pariter, felicia vota secundent,
Et voleant Christi regis amore frui.

V

ABSTRACT OF EARLIER MEROVINGIAN HISTORY

FROM a man educated in the manner described on pp. 6, 7 it would be vain to expect a logically disposed history in which the threads are skilfully controlled; or one in which the inessential is subordinated to the essential, repetitions and digressions are avoided, and the story moves forward in its natural order interpreted by the selective skill of a trained writer. We are too often reminded, as we read, of the way in which simple people recount events with their: 'As I should have said,' 'To go back to what I was saying,' or other admissions of inconsequent procedure. The reader who has not previously learned the main order of events, or the relationship of the principal persons to each other and to the story, will be sometimes perplexed and often irritated by anticipations, by harkings back, by digressions, and by the relation of events out of their chronological order. He will therefore find it of some assistance to be provided with a historical abstract introducing the persons and events of early Merovingian history in their proper sequence, especially as the characters of the chief *dramatis personae* have been described in advance.

At the opening of the fifth century, the Salian and Ripuarian Franks were settled in the north-east part of the modern Belgium and beyond the Middle Rhine respectively, the Meuse forming an approximate line of division.[1] They had behind them towards the north the Frisians and the Saxons, the latter people extending from the North Sea into Westphalia. The Alamanni were neighbours of the Ripuarian Franks beyond the Main; the Burgundian country adjoined that of the Alamanni; the Thuringians occupied the forest region still bearing their name, but it should be noted, to avoid confusion, that the territory of the Salian Franks in the north-east of Belgium, which bore the name of Thoringia, was quite distinct from that of the Thuringians in Germany. The Franks had been established as *foederati* of the Empire by Constantius II and Julian; they were divided into groups under several kings, the principal royal family being the Merovingians, named after its founder, Merovech. The first Merovingian king to make any mark in history was Clodio, whose residence was at Dispargum in the Belgian Thuringia.[1] He began the Frankish expansion by attacking Artois, where he was defeated by Aëtius in 428 at Vicus Helenae;[2] yet not long afterwards he seems to have crossed the Ardennes and taken Cambrai.[3] On the death of Clodio, the favour of Aëtius secured the throne for Merovech, the younger son,[4] adopted by the Roman general when he made peace with the Franks; 'Fredegar' says that in 431 this Merovech commanded the Frankish contingent in the army led by Aëtius against Attila. After the death of Aëtius, Merovech broke with Rome, attacking Germania Prima and Belgica Secunda;[5] he died in 456, and was succeeded by his son Childeric.[6] Gregory tells a legendary story of the expulsion of this prince by his people for his dissolute way of life, relating that Aegidius, the *magister militum* representing the Roman name at Soissons, was elected king in his place, but that the Franks found themselves drawn into too many wars by the change, and therefore recalled the exile after eight years.[7] The returning prince was followed by Basina, the Thuringian queen, whom he married. Childeric, after his restoration, played the part of a vigorous and successful ruler. He loyally maintained the Frankish connexion with the Empire, aiding the Roman commander Paul in his operations against the Saxons.[1] At the same time he pursued a policy of expansion, advancing to the Loire and capturing Angers.[2]

---

[1] The reader may consult Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., i, p. 99, for a valuable summary of the position in this part of Europe; also S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age*, 1926, ch. i.

---

[1] Perhaps Diest on the Denier, or Duisborch on the Thille, between Louvain and Brussels.

[2] Sidonius (*Carm.* v, pp. 212 ff.). The site of the battle was Helesmes, in the Département du Nord.

[3] The ninth chapter of Bk. II is the source for this, but cf. also Hincmar's later statement in his Life of S. Remi; Gregory probably learned it from Frankish tradition. Prof. Bury remarks that, as the Franks remained *foederati* after this invasion, it must have been recognized by the Empire (p. 243).

[4] There was a tradition that Clodio was not the father of Merovech; this may explain the ambiguous phrase *de huius stirpe quidam Merovechum regem fuisse adserunt.*

[5] Sidonius, Panegyric on Avitus, l. 372.

[6] Childericus, as the name was written in Latin. Childeric's capital was Tournai, near which were found the well-known jewelled sword and hilt, and gold ornaments, now in the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris.

[7] The legend repeated by Gregory is to the effect that when Childeric went into banishment, a friend broke a coin into two halves, each of the two men keeping one half; it was agreed that when a messenger brought him the half coin the exile should know that it was safe for him to return (II. 11 (12)). The place of his banishment is called Thuringia, which some have regarded as

Childeric was succeeded in 481 by his son Clovis[3], the real founder of Frankish greatness, and the first prince of his house to be converted to Christianity. 'He saw clearly that the Imperial power in Gaul was no longer of account. The few provinces that were still administered in the name of the emperor at Constantinople were cut off from the rest of the empire by the kingdoms of the Visigoths and the Burgundians. It was evidently the destiny of Gaul to be possessed entirely by German rulers, and Clovis determined that the Franks should have their share.'[4] He turned his gaze towards the rich valleys of the Seine and Loire, where Syagrius was now the acknowledged leader of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, Remigius (S. Remi) standing at the head of the Church in his dominions. Clovis defeated Syagrius near Soissons in 486; but though he now controlled Belgica Secunda, with Soissons and Reims, he permitted Roman administration to continue for some years. It is with the defeat of Syagrius that Frankish history emerges from the dim region of shadow into clear light; from this time forward there is a continuous record of events. The position of the Visigoths as the first Teutonic power in Gaul was now menaced, and the first step taken to their ultimate defeat. In 493 Clovis married Clotild (Chrodechild), niece of Gundobad, king of Burgundy, who had murdered her father and his own brother, Chilperic; Clotild was a Christian and a Catholic.[5]

---

the country about Dispargum (see above); others not without probability consider it the German Thuringia (Pfister in Lavisse, ii. 95). Aegidius was succeeded in 464 by his son Syagrius, 'king' of Soissons, who also, in like manner, upheld the Roman tradition, and may have succeeded his father as *magister militum* with the duty of defending Belgic Gaul.

[1] Cf. Bury, as above, p. 346.

[2] II. 18. The Saxons had occupied islands between Saumur and Angers. For Saxons on the coast of Gaul cf. F. Lot, *Les migrations saxonnes*, pp. 13 ff.

[3] 'Clovis' is the form consecrated by general use. The real name was Chlodovech (*Chlodo* or *Chludo* = renowned, *vech* = warrior, priest). Cf. Pfister in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, ii, p. 96.

[4] Bury, as above, p. 346.

[5] Burgundy for some time remained Arian, Bishop Avitus of Vienne having failed to convert Gundobad. Aprunculus, catholic Burgundian bishop of

At this time his dominions seem to have extended to the northern bank of the Loire,[1] and he made a treaty with the Armorican (Breton) confederacy,[2] thus protecting his western flank. In 496 he was baptized by S. Remi ; the account given by Gregory of the ceremony is picturesque, but probably in the main correct.[3]

When Clovis embraced Christianity as a Catholic, and not as an Arian, he made the fortune of his people.[4] When Gregory compares Clovis to Constantine, he has right on his side.[5] The importance of his catholicism cannot be exaggerated ; it at once gave him the most serviceable battle-cry against the Arian Visigoths, whose overthrow was now his principal aim. It enabled him to use with instant effect his well-known appeal to his nation : ‘ It vexeth my soul that these Arians still hold a part of Gaul. Let us go forth with the aid of God to overcome them, and subject the land to our power ’ (II. 37). It placed at his disposal the whole body of the Gallo-Roman bishops, almost all of whom were drawn from distinguished provincial families. The bishops of Gaul were the chief repositories of the higher culture and tradition ; they understood diplomatic usage, and possessed the art of administration ; they enjoyed immense prestige among the common people, of whom they were the protectors against ill-usage and aggression. No more valuable allies could have gathered to the Frankish standard. They brought not only the strength due to their virtues and their accomplishments, but the influence which they were able

---

Langres, had fled to Auvergne, and two other bishops accompanied Clotild to the territory of Clovis (X. 31).

[1] At any rate the Loire must have been his frontier a few years later when he held his famous interview with Alaric on an island in the river, as neutral ground between their respective territories (II. 35).

[2] The Bretons at this time were being harried by Saxon sea-pirates and were indisposed to interfere with Clovis.

[3] The immediate cause of the conversion is said to have been his victory over the Alamanni, following upon a prayer to the God of the Christians in an hour of grievous stress. German writers (Schubert, Vogel, Krusch) have questioned the truth of the story and transferred the scene of the baptism from Reims to Tours, and the date to 507–8 (cf. note to II. 22 (31)) ; French writers (Levillain, d’Arbois de Jubainville) maintain the claim of the former city and the accepted date (cf. vol. II, p. 498). The victory over the Alamanni is mentioned by Gregory in II. 30, and may have occurred in 495 (Mommsen, *Praefatio* to Cassiodorus, *Variae*, p. xxxi, in M. G. H., *Auct. Antiq.*, Tom. XII). Avitus of Vienne (*Ep.* 46 (41)) speaks of the victory and conversion, but gives no date.

[4] Bury, as above, p. 347.

[5] Pfister in Lavisse, ii, p. 99.

to exert among the Gallo-Roman Catholics in Visigothic Aquitaine, who were both numerous and disaffected.[1] Their adhesion assured the triumph of the Franks. Before challenging the Visigoths to a final trial of strength, Clovis made sure of the Burgundians. Godegisel, brother of Gundobad, came over to his side, and the latter was besieged in Avignon, only obtaining terms from the enemy by the adroit diplomacy of a Gallo-Roman named Aridius (II. 23 (32)). Gundobad soon took a terrible vengeance on his brother, whom he slew on the capture of Vienne (II. 24 (33)), Clovis being then occupied elsewhere; but his politic action with regard to the Franks in the town preserved the independence of his country for a long period. Despite the efforts for peace of the great Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, who had long been concerned to keep the peace between Franks and Visigoths and now sought to secure the safety of Southern France by something like a league of Teutonic nations,[2] the Frankish king declared a religious war on his Arian neighbours, Gundobad the Burgundian actually becoming his ally. When the new champion of the Catholic faith once took the field, everything is said to have favoured his advance. Miraculous aid prevented a check at the river Vienne; a hind appeared, and by crossing revealed a ford.[3] The armies met in 507 at Vouillé on the Clain, near Poitiers, and the Goths were defeated, Clovis slaying their king Alaric with his own hand.[4] His son Theuderic (Thierry) followed up the victory, passing through Albi and Rodez to Auvergne, which he subjected to his father's dominion. Clovis himself, after wintering at Bordeaux and taking Toulouse, went in triumph to Tours, where he received from the Emperor Anastasius the diploma and insignia of a proconsul.[5] Robed in the purple tunic and embroidered chlamys, and wearing a diadem, he rode scattering gold pieces from the basilica of

---

[1] The Visigoths at this time were proportionately weakened (p. 181).

[2] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Var.* iii. 1–4. Letters to Alaric, Gundobad, Clovis, and the kings of the Heruli, Warni, and Thuringians.

[3] II. 27 (37). The king had also received a favourable omen. As the messengers dispatched by him entered the church, the choir was singing Ps. xvii (xviii). 40–1. Moreover, a globe of fire in the sky above Poitiers aided the direction of his march.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] The title of Augustus was not conferred; Clovis ranked only as a proconsul and Patrician (cf. note, vol. II, p. 503); he wore the diadem as Frankish king (Mommsen, *Ostgothische Studien*, in *Neues Archiv*, 1890).

S. Martin to the cathedral within the walls. This investiture set the seal on Gallo-Roman loyalty; the conquests of the Frankish chieftain were now legitimized in their sight.[1] Only one part of Gaul now remained under Gothic control; Provence and the Narbonnaise were preserved by the rapid action of Theodoric the Ostrogoth. After the disaster at Vouillé he sent a general named Ibbas into this area, who, according to the Chronicle of Cassiodorus, drove out the Franks by force of arms.[2] The Narbonnaise, afterwards known as Septimania, was ruled for a time by the Ostrogothic noble Theuda, later himself elected king, in the name of the young Visigothic prince Amalaric, to whom it was soon ceded. Provence was held by the Ostrogoths after the death of Theodoric, and was finally ceded to the Franks by Witigis.[3]

The founder of Frankish greatness did not live many years after the crowning mercy of Vouillé, dying at Paris in 511. During his last years he consolidated his position by destroying all those who were likely to prove dangerous to his throne. He was not yet the only Frankish king, and it was necessary for his security that he should become so. Sigibert, king of Cologne, who had joined him against Alaric, was murdered by his son Chloderic, the prince thinking thereby to secure a friend in the great Merovingian leader.[4] Clovis sent envoys to him, doubtless with precise instructions. While Chloderic was displaying his treasures before them, one of them executed him in the customary Frankish fashion by cleaving his skull with his war-axe.[1] Clovis himself soon arrived on the scene. He loudly disclaimed all complicity,[2] but invited the people to entrust their destinies to his keeping. They were proud to follow his counsel, applauded with cheers and clash of arms, and raised him upon the shield.[3] Next came the turn of Chararic, a Frankish prince who had failed to support him at the time of the attack upon Syagrius. The time-server and his son were captured, and degraded by the cutting off of the long hair marking their royal rank; then both were driven into the Church. An imprudent remark ascribed to the son was interpreted by Clovis as a threat of future vengeance, and father and son were promptly put to death (II. 30 (41)). The last to be removed was Ragnachar, a dissolute prince living at Cambrai. Defeated in battle, and confronted by Clovis, he was asked why he had disgraced the Frankish name by enduring defeat. ''Twere better for thee to have died'; with these words the conqueror cleft the doomed man's skull. Then, turning to the dead man's brother, he cried: 'Hadst thou stood by him, he had never thus stood in bonds,' and meted to him the same punishment.[4] A brother of Ragnachar, Rignomer by name, was then killed at Le Mans. By this systematic process of removal, applied successively to other kings and relatives whom he regarded as possible sources of danger, he extended his kingdom over all Gaul.[5]

---

[1] Pfister in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de France*, ii, p. 103.

[2] Procopius, *De bell. Goth.* i. 12; Jornandes, *Get.* c. 58; *Vita S. Caesarii* (in Migne, *Patr. Lat.* lxvii); Cassiodorus, *Chron. ad ann.* 508: *contra Francos a domno nostro destinatur exercitus qui Gallias Francorum depraedatione confusas victis hostibus et fugatis suo adquisivit imperio.* Several of the official letters written by Cassiodorus for Theodoric are addressed to his military and other representatives, or to the people of Provence. The king made every effort to treat the inhabitants of Provence justly (*sic vincere ut subiecti se doleant nostrum dominium tardius acquisisse*: Cassiod. *Variae*, iii. 43). They are reminded that they are now restored *in antiquam libertatem* (iii. 17). To the people of Arles, who had undergone a siege, as well as to others, he remits taxes (*ibid.* iii. 32), and sends money to repair the walls of the city (*ibid.* iii. 44). He sends Gemellus, as *vicarius praefectorum*, to introduce the security of Roman law (*ibid.* iii. 17). His army of occupation was fed by corn from Italy, that the provincials might not be oppressed; the army was regularly paid and forbidden to 'live on the country' (*ibid.* iii. 41, 42). Ibbas is urged to be as great in peace as in war, and to see that the Church receives back all property unjustly taken (*ibid.* iv. 17). These facts are given to illustrate the remarkable difference in civilization between Theodoric the Ostrogoth and the Frankish kings described by Gregory of Tours.

[3] For the Ostrogoths and Provence, see also B. Krusch's edition of the Life of Caesarius in M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.*, iii, pp. 440 ff.

[4] II. 29 (40). Gregory roundly states that Clovis incited Chloderic to kill his father: *misit clam ad filium Sigiberti, dicens*, &c.

But having done this Clovis was still unsatisfied: there might yet lurk somewhere a kinsman, spared by the axe, who might one day threaten his house. Among his intimates he would lament his lot as comparable to that of a stranger in a foreign land, with none to succour him in the day of adversity. 'But he said this, not in compunction for the death of these men, but from guile, to see if it might lead to the discovery of someone, still overlooked, whom he might put to death.'[1]

---

[1] While he was showing a chest full of gold pieces, they asked him to plunge his hand in and show how deep was the mass of coins; the action compelled him to lean forward, and lay himself open to the blow: *quod cum fecisset, et esset valde declinus, unus elevata manu bipinne cerebrum eius inlisit* (*ibid.*).

[2] *In his nequaquam conscius sum.* 'How should I shed the blood of a kinsman? that were an infamy.'

[3] For this ceremony cf. note to II. 29 (40).

[4] II. 31 (42). Clovis had won over the notables of Ragnachar by a bribe of spurious armlets and baldrics: *sed totum adsimilatum auro erat enim aereum deauratum sub dolo factum.* When, too late, they discovered the trick, they were curtly told that such was the fitting coin for traitors.

[5] *Regnum suum per totas Gallias dilatavit.* Except the South East (cf., p. 94).

Clovis was buried at Paris in the church of the Holy Apostles (afterwards S. Geneviève), which he had built conjointly with his queen. After his death, Clotild withdrew to Tours, to live a life of retirement.

The story of Clovis presented to us by Gregory contains legendary features and is much embellished by the bishop,[2] but in the main lines it is probably true. This heartless disregard for human life, this combination of sly cunning and a malicious humour, are qualities united so often in his descendants that we may believe him to have really possessed them and to have followed their impulsion. And Gregory had no interest in blackening the character of the man chosen by Providence to establish the Catholic faith against the detested Arians ; very much the reverse. He regarded the founder of the Merovingian dynasty as the chosen instrument of God, and this predestination covered the multitude of his sins.[2]

The greatness of the work achieved by Clovis became apparent at the Council of Orleans which met in the year of his death. It was attended by the bishops of no less than thirty-two sees, thirteen of which, but a few years before, had been subject to Visigothic dominion.[3] But, as ever on the disappearance of a commanding personality, that work at once suffered by his removal. The conqueror lying dead in Paris, the neighbouring peoples began to hope for aggrandisement at the expense of the Franks, and the Goths regained Rouergue, the Velay, the Gévaudan, and Albi in the south-east. But all hope of recovering Aquitaine was destroyed by the unity of the four sons of Clovis,[1] who were astute enough to understand the need of holding together, at any rate for a time. They acquiesced in a peace, sealed by the marriage of the younger Clotild, their sister, with Amalaric, grandson of Theodoric the Great. It was not until the lapse of several years after their father's death that the impulse towards expansion became once more irresistible, and found its favourable occasion. Gundobad, king of Burgundy, died in 517, leaving two sons, Sigismund, who inherited Lyons, with the larger part of his father's dominions; and a second son, Godomar, who may have received Vienne and Southern Burgundy.[2] Sigismund was a catholic, the friend of Bishop Avitus, and severe rules against the Arians were now made in Burgundy. He had married, as his first wife, a daughter of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, an alliance which had insured his dominions against Frankish aggression. After her death, Sigismund, who had been made Patrician by the Emperor Anastasius, may have looked to Justin for protection. His first queen had left him with a son, Sigeric, for whom his second queen conceived a violent dislike, denouncing him to her lord as conspiring to murder him and unite his kingdom to that of Theodoric. Sigismund, in an access of blind fury, had the young prince strangled, but afterwards bitterly repented the deed. Gregory adds to the story his own belief that despite this contrition the divine vengeance followed at his heels.[3]

---

[1] *Sed hoc non de morte horum condolens, sed dolo dicebat, si forte potuisset adhuc aliquem repperire, ut interficeret.*

[2] Cf. L. Halphen, 'Grégoire de Tours, historien de Clovis', in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot*, Paris 1925, pp. 235 ff.

[3] Gregory ascribes the high fortune of Clovis to his catholicism, the disasters of Alaric to his Arian heresy (III. Prologue). Clovis certainly deserved the gratitude of the Church which he took under his protection, safeguarding its property and dependants. He was the friend and defender of the bishops, who conceded to him the rights formerly claimed by the Christian emperors (Pfister in Lavisse, as above, ii. 106).

[4] For the Council of Orleans in 511 see M. G. H., *Legum, Sectio III*, vol. i: *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, ed. Maassen.

It overtook the Burgundian king in the year 523. We have seen that Clotild, widow of Clovis, had withdrawn to Tours, where she lived with a high reputation for sanctity, only leaving her new home for occasional visits to Paris. Early in this year, when her three sons were together in this city, she came to them there, and called on them to avenge the death of her father and mother, slain years before by Gundobad, father of the reigning Burgundian kings. Even in the heart of this woman, whose character was in many ways far above that of most Teutonic princesses, the law of blood-revenge remained as sacred as if she had never embraced the Christian faith. She had come from her placid existence of continual prayer and charity to incite her sons to a bloody vendetta, in which the sin of the father was to be visited upon the children. Her action illustrates the strange mingling of incongruous moral codes in the Christian Gaul of her day.[1] Her wishes accorded too well with the ambitions of her sons not to find a responsive echo in their hearts. They entered upon a campaign against Burgundy, their half-brother Theuderic, not being Clotild's son, standing for the time aloof. Sigismund was defeated and his army dispersed. He received the tonsure, and fled to the monastery of Agaune; there he was seized and delivered to the soldiers of Chlodomer, by whom he was led captive to the territory of Orleans, together with his consort and two surviving children. His brother Godomar was more fortunate. Though at first driven back, he still kept the field until the Franks withdrew into winter quarters, leaving him free to organize further resistance. Next year Chlodomer, apparently acting without his two younger brothers, again marched upon Burgundy, obtaining some kind of promise of support from his half-brother. But before starting he caused Sigismund to be slain with his queen and children and thrown into a well at Coulmiers (Loiret), in defiance of a solemn warning given him by Avitus, abbot of S. Mesmin de Micy.[2] As Sigismund was Theuderic's father-in-law, the act was equally cruel and impolitic. The Ripuarians did, indeed, join the forces of Chlodomer, and were with them when they encountered the army of Godomar at Vézeronce on the Rhône in June 524. But when the Burgundians broke, Chlodomer, rashly pursuing too far, fell into an ambush and lost his life, whereupon panic seized his army, which took to disorderly flight.[3] It is significant that the Ripuarians drew off in good order, and that Theuderic formally made peace with Godomar.[1] Burgundy enjoyed a second respite, but emerged from the struggle with serious loss of territory. For while Godomar was engaged with the Franks, Theodoric the Ostrogoth, as *tertius gaudens*, snatched from him a number of cities north of the Durance.

---

[1] Theuderic, the eldest son, born to Clovis by a concubine; Chlodomer, Childebert I, and Lothar I, the three sons of Clotild. Apart from a few facts given by Marius of Aventicum, the History (Bks. III and IV. 1–21) is the only source for the sons of Clovis.

[2] Pfister thinks that there was no formal division at the death of Gundobad (in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, ii, pt. i, p. 122).

[3] III. 5. Sigismund withdrew in compunction to the monastery of S. Maurice d'Agaune in the Valais, which he had himself built, or rebuilt, *cum domibus basilicisque*.

---

[1] III. 6. After the murder of her grandsons, Gregory, oblivious of this incitement, speaks of her holiness in the highest terms: she was charitable and generous, constant in prayer: *ut putaretur . . . non regina sed propria Dei ancilla, . . . quam non regnum filiorum, non ambitio saeculi nec facultas extulit ad ruinam sed humilitas evexit ad gratiam* (III. 18).

[2] III. 6. Sigismund, who was a generous supporter of the Church, was afterwards canonized, despite the murder of his own son.

[3] The story of the ambush, and of the bearing aloft of Chlodomer's head upon a lance, is tersely related by Gregory (III. 6).

The sons of Clovis now being reduced to three, there was a great inheritance open to seizure, for their dead brother's sons were minors. They proceeded to act after the manner of their kind. Lothar at once married his dead brother's queen, Guntheuc.[2] After a few years Childebert, not concealing his desire to annex a part of his dead brother's kingdom, viewed with anxiety the protection afforded by his mother Clotild to the three young sons of Chlodomer.[3] On one of her visits to Paris, when it was her custom to lodge in the precincts of her favourite church of S. Peter and S. Paul, the queen-mother took with her the young princes, the eldest of whom was now ten years of age. This was the chance of uncles cruel as any known to legend. Childebert, dreading that his mother might soon succeed in securing for her grandchildren their father's inheritance, summoned Lothar to Paris that they might decide whether they should kill their nephews outright, or only disinherit and degrade them by cutting the long hair which among the Franks was the sign of royal blood. Lothar obeyed, and on his arrival joined his brother in his palace, which adjoined the old Roman Baths. The description of the ensuing murder is one of the most horrible among true tales. The degenerate Gallo-Roman Arcadius, sent by the two kings to their mother carrying as symbols of his message a naked sword and a pair of shears, gave her the alternative of seeing the boys shorn and degraded, or else put to death. In her stupefaction, not knowing what she said, she cried : 'Better were they dead than shorn !' and the imprudent words were at once reported at the palace : 'the queen consents, finish what you have begun.' The kings proceeded to their work. Lothar, the more brutal of the two, seized and stabbed the eldest boy ; Childebert was overcome with compunction when the seven-year-old Gunthar fell at his feet begging for his life;[1] but Lothar, with a savage threat to his weaker brother, caused the boy to be thrust towards him, and met him with the point of his dagger. The two brothers now joined in doing to death the attendants of the two boys, whereupon Lothar took horse and rode home, 'recking little of the murder of his nephews.'[2] This callous indifference was not shared by some of the adherents of the dead Chlodomer. They had interfered before the youngest child, Chlodovald, met his intended fate, and carried him off by force, to live a less perilous life than that of a Frankish prince in the power of his uncles.[3] The terrible story ends with the burial of the murdered boys by their grandmother in the church of S. Peter and S. Paul.[4] It is a narrative of callous and inhuman wickedness which makes the methods of a Richard III appear almost mild.

---

[1] It has been suggested that Theuderic took no part in the battle, the inference being that he allowed his brother to be defeated, his queen thus being revenged upon her brother's murderer.

[2] *Nec mora . . . in matrimonio sociavit* (III. 6).

[3] Theudovald, Gunthar, and Chlodovald.

The inheritance of Chlodomer was now divided between the two perpetrators of this crime, Orleans falling to Childebert, Tours to Lothar. Theuderic's possible claims were ignored, and for the moment the king of the Ripuarians accepted the accomplished fact; he needed the help of Lothar for a contemplated attack upon Thuringia. That country had recently been divided between three brothers. Hermanfrid, who had married a daughter of Theodoric the Great, murdered his brother Berthar; but failing to overthrow his other brother Baderic, unwisely called Theuderic to his aid, promising him the half of Baderic's kingdom. The Frankish king had accepted the invitation, and Baderic was crushed, but Hermanfrid did not keep his word. This insult had now to be avenged,[5] and the risk was reduced by the death of the great Theodoric; but in order that the work might be done thoroughly and swiftly, the help of Lothar was to be desired.[1] The combined strength of the brothers was too great for the Thuringians and their allies. Hermanfrid's armies were defeated on the Undstrut, and he himself was bidden to wait as a tributary prince upon the proud king of the Ripuarians in his palace at Tolbiac (Zülpich). A guarantee of safety had been given; but walking one day with his host upon the walls of the place, he was pushed by an unknown hand, falling from the summit of the wall to the ground below, where he gave up the ghost (III. 8). His death must be laid to the account of Theuderic, whose unscrupulous and revengeful character was often displayed. Having made use of Lothar, he now contemplated his destruction, which he had already once attempted.[2] Gregory describes a trap laid by the elder brother after the campaign in Thuringia, which he had relied upon to achieve his end. He suspended hangings along one wall of the house where he was lodged, and stationed armed men behind it. He then sent a message to Lothar that he wished to consult with him in private. But Lothar had heard of the reception prepared for him, and entered with armed followers of his own. Moreover, the hangings were too short, so that the feet of the would-be assassins were visible. The affair was a failure, not to be concealed by Theuderic's endeavour to set matters straight by talking at large and making up a story to explain the presence of the half-hidden men, still less by his clumsy gift to his brother of a large silver dish.[3] Lothar accepted the gift, and returned with it to his own lodging. The episode which followed was typical of Frankish mentality. Theuderic, thinking his tale believed, repented of his generosity and sent his son Theudebert to ask that the dish might be returned. Lothar, perhaps in scorn, perhaps out of diplomacy, sent it back without comment, probably intending to bide his time. If the episode is true, and it accords only too well with the character of a Frankish prince in the sixth century, it presents a picture of blended treachery and meanness hardly equalled at any period of European history. Before the brothers returned home a new cause of hatred had arisen between them. Hermanfrid of Thuringia had taken into his house his niece Radegund, the young daughter of his brother Berthar, whom he had put to death.[1] Though she was a mere child of ten, her beauty had captivated both the Frankish kings, and apparently they drew lots for this part of their spoil. Lothar had won, carrying off the princess, and some years afterwards wedded her at Soissons, though he already had three wives espoused according to the old Frankish custom.[2]

---

[1] Childebert had a reputation for piety (p. 48).

[2] III. 18: *Parvi pendens de interfectione nepotum.* The date of the murders was probably between 526 and 528.

[3] *Per auxilium virorum fortium liberatus est.* Chlodovald later cut off his long locks with his own hand, and becoming a priest, lived a life of good works, dying about the year 560. He was canonized, and is the S. Cloud whose name is perpetuated in the well-known place of that name near Paris.

[4] Clotild henceforward devoted herself to prayer and charity, giving largely to churches and monasteries, until she was reputed less a queen than a royal handmaiden of God (III. 18, end).

[5] The new campaign took place towards 531; most of the events with regard to it are related in the poem of Fortunatus, *De excidio Thoringiae*, probably written for Radegund, who may herself have supplied the poet with the facts.

---

[1] Theuderic incited his brother by tales of the horrible cruelties formerly practised by the Thuringians on the Franks (III. 7), ending with the words: *Eamus cum Dei adiutorio contra eos!*

[2] He owed Lothar a grudge for leaving him out when Chlodomer's kingdom was divided (cf. above, p. 47).

[3] III. 7: *intelligens hunc haec cognovisse, fabulam fingit, et alia ex aliis loquitur. Denique nesciens qualiter dolum suum deliniret, discum ei magnum argenteum pro gratia dedit. . . . In talibus enim dolis Theodoricus multum callidus erat.*

The death of Theodoric the Ostrogoth had removed the main obstacle in the path of Frankish ambitions. But a revolution against Theuderic now broke out in Auvergne in consequence of a report that this king had perished in the Thuringian campaign. This was a province in which Gallo-Roman tradition survived with more intensity than elsewhere ; it had already shown signs of restiveness under the government of a barbarian ruler living so far away, and the present seemed a favourable opportunity to transfer allegiance to Childebert, whose evil satellite, the Gallo-Roman Arcadius, was working in his interest in Clermont.[3]

The king of Paris, believing the rumour as to his brother's death, marched south on receipt of a message from his chief supporter, who succeeded in introducing him into the city. But before he had time to establish his position, he learned that Theuderic was not only alive, but returning victorious from his campaign. He hastily evacuated Auvergne, but now turned his arms against the Visigothic king Amalaric, who was killed in one of the engagements, though under his successor, Theuda, the Goths rallied and recovered the Narbonnaise. Childebert was forced to withdraw, taking with him much booty, largely carried off from churches (III. 10).

---

[1] III. 4.

[2] *Per solidum et denarium* (p. 341). The private life of Lothar was as irregular as that of any of the Frankish princes. One of his wives, as we have noted, was the widow of his brother Chlodomer. The two others were sisters, both serfs, Ingund and Aregund by name. The way in which he came to marry the second sister illustrates the mingled slyness and unscrupulousness of this debased character. Radegund did not endure her detestable lord for long ; she was converted to Christianity, and soon had serious aspirations after an ascetic life, which must have rendered existence at such a court as Lothar's insupportable. When a younger brother, who had accompanied her, was murdered by her husband's orders, she fled the palace and took refuge at Noyon under the protection of S. Médard. She became a deaconess and withdrew to Aquitaine, founding at Poitiers the famous monastery of which we read so much in the pages of Gregory and Fortunatus. Lothar dared not dispute his queen with the Church (cf. pp. 67–8).

[3] III. 9–12.

In 532–3 Childebert was persuaded by Lothar to join in a new attack on Burgundy. Theuderic refused to take part in the expedition, to the disgust of his followers; their opposition was, however, overcome by the promise of booty, and they followed him into Auvergne to chastise those who had revolted against his authority (III. 11). At the first news of his approach, Arcadius basely deserted his countrymen, and fled for safety to Childebert's territory of Berry. The armies of Theuderic passed over Auvergne like clouds of locusts (III. 12). Such of the people as could escape fled within the walls of Clermont, or to the hills; the rest were destroyed, with their homes, their trees, and the crops of their fields. Clermont offered a stout resistance, as it had done in the earlier days of Visigothic aggression; it was taken, but the fear of local saints induced Theuderic to stay his hand. Though the city was not destroyed, fire and sword were carried even into the strong places among the hills.[1]

His revenge accomplished, Theuderic consented to aid his brothers in their war with Godomar, the Burgundian king, who now stood courageously on his defence with the help of Visigothic supports. But while the campaign was in progress he died early in the year 534, and the Ripuarian kingdom passed to his son Theudebert. This prince was too tried a warrior and too strong a character for his rapacious uncles to despoil, as they were preparing to do;[2] he was supported, moreover, by most of the nobles of his country. The new king, his position once asserted, joined Childebert and Lothar in the Burgundian war, which ended in the capture and death of Godomar (534). The independence of Burgundy was at last destroyed; but the land did not suffer the worst at the hands of the victors. The Burgundians were forced to pay tribute, and were rendered liable to military service, but they retained their own law and there was no universal confiscation of property.[1]

---

[1] III. 12, 13. Thighernum (Thiers), Lovolautrum (Vollore) in the hills of upper Allier, and Meroliac (Châtel-Marlhac) in the Cantal paid a ransom. Monasteries and churches were not spared; the church of S. Julian at Brionde was sacked. The younger people of both sexes were led away in bonds and sold as slaves; the priests were taken to reinforce the churches in the valleys of the Rhine and Moselle. Many years passed before Auvergne began to recover from the disaster. (Cf. also Lives of S. Fidolius, S. Quintianus, S. Gallus, and S. Austremonius in Dom M. Bouquet, *Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, iii, pp. 406–8.

[2] III. 23: *consurgentes . . . contra Theodobertum regnum eius auferre voluerunt.*

Once more the Frankish nation had expanded its borders, but there remained one other task—the capture of Provence. In achieving this they were indirectly helped by the East Roman Empire. Not long after the death of Theodoric (526), Justinian had been crowned emperor in Constantinople. It became his policy to reconquer for Byzantium the territories lost by Rome, and the first efforts were made in Africa and in Italy. In 534 Belisarius destroyed the kingdom of the Vandals, restoring the province of Africa to the Empire. He then invaded Italy (536), beginning those Gothic wars which were to impoverish the whole land, undo the work of Theodoric, and give the emperor a brief and vain shadow of Roman dominion. Justinian was alive to the importance of the Frankish power, and ready to pay well for its assistance; the rapacious Franks on their side were ready to accept the money. The position of the Goths seemed no longer tenable when Belisarius had captured Rome, and their king Witigis saw but one hope—to outbid the emperor and buy over the Franks to his side. He offered a great sum in cash (a hundred and twenty thousand *solidi*) and the cession of all the land in the south-east of Gaul which his nation had held since the intervention of Theodoric to save the Visigothic kingdom (p. 94). In this way Provence fell into the lap of the Franks, whose frontiers now extended to the Alps: Arles and Marseilles, Avignon and Aix, passed at length to the sons of Clovis, with the Valais, the Grisons, and the German Tyrol, regions of which the peoples had accepted Ostrogothic supremacy. The tide of

---

[1] Theudebert received the north of the country (with Langres, Besançon, Avenches, Windisch, Sion, Autun, Chalon). Childebert had the centre (with Mâcon, Geneva, and Lyons). Lothar probably received the south (with Grenoble and Die). The Gallo-Romans and Burgundians had mingled peaceably; there was a Burgundian unity, destined to assert itself in a later period of Frankish history. The country was relatively civilized, and there were monastic schools at Agaune. Cf. C. Binding, *Das burgundisch-romanische Königreich von 443–532*, Leipzig, 1868; A. Jahn, *Gesch. der Burgundionen und Burgundens bis zum Ende der I. Dynastie*, Halle, 1874.

Merovingian conquest thus reached high-water mark ; it never flowed farther.[1]

In their relations with the Empire and with the Ostrogoths the policy of the Frankish kings was marked by the usual double-dealing. They did not at first send their own men to reinforce Witigis, but they connived at the march of ten thousand Burgundians to his support ; Milan was retaken (538) and brutally punished for its sympathy with the Byzantine invader.[2] In the next year (539) the ambitious Theudebert, who aspired to the subjection of Italy and Rome, openly committed the double treason which hitherto he had dissembled. He led a host of Franks, Burgundians, and pagan Germans into the Italian plain.[3] The reward of certain Goths who allowed the supposed friends of their nation to cross the Po was a frightful massacre. The main Gothic army beyond was standing prepared to engage the Byzantine force before it, but not the Frankish hosts, whose approach in their rear they saw with joy, as the coming of their own friends. They suffered a bitter disillusion. The Franks fell suddenly upon them and destroyed them as a fighting force. It was next the turn of the imperial army, in like manner lulled into false confidence by the belief that the new comers were their allies. They met the same fate as the Goths, and for a time the basest treachery seemed the royal road to success. But the ravages of the Frankish hosts led to famine ; dysentery made havoc of their own ranks ; and Theudebert, who had advanced to Venetia, returned home without having made any permanent conquest. Nevertheless, the East Roman Empire soon afterwards took a step which proved the important position of the Merovingian kings in the contemporary world. Justinian, partly moved by the successes of the new Ostrogothic King Totila, recognized them as lords of a Gaul over which henceforward he renounced all claim. From this period for the first time the coins of the Frankish rulers cease to bear the image of the emperors.[4] The first gold coins bearing a Frankish name are those of Theudebert (cf. p. 223).

---

[1] Provence was divided as an independent unit. Theudebert received Aix, Digne, and Glandève, with territory in the upper valleys of the Rhône and Inn. Arles and Marseilles fell to the lot of Childebert ; while Lothar probably gained Orange, Carpentras, and Gap (Pfister, as above, p. 124).

[2] See T. Hodgkin, *Italy and her invaders*, iv, pp. 330–4.

[3] Procopius, *De bello gothico*, i. 25. Cf. also Hodgkin, as above, iv, pp. 348–51.

[4] Procopius, *Bell. goth.* iii. 33. At first no change was made in the image,

While Theudebert fared ill in Italy, his two uncles succeeded no better in an expedition against the Visigoths in Spain.[1] They entered the country by the passes of the Western Pyrenees (542), ravaging the country and taking Pampeluna; but Saragossa, now, as before and after in her history, proved the ruin of the foreign invader. The two kings, forced to retreat, only regained Gaul at the cost of a heavy payment to the Visigothic general. Childebert regarded his escape as due to S. Vincent, patron saint of Saragossa, in whose honour he built a church near Paris.[1]

During this period Theudebert had ordered a fresh invasion of Italy; he is thought at this time to have nourished dreams of conquest at the expense of the Byzantine emperor. He was irritated by Justinian's inclusion of the Franks among the vanquished peoples enumerated in the imperial title.[2] It has been suggested that he entertained the project of invading Pannonia both from the Bavarian and Venetian sides, and carrying his arms to the very walls of New Rome. These projects, if ever really his, were not to be realized.[3] While hunting in a German forest, he received injuries which in course of time resulted in his death (548). He left behind him in his own country a better reputation than any of his predecessors. Gregory praises him for generosity in victory,[4]

---

which remained Byzantine; only the legend was new (M. Prou, *Cat. des monnaies françaises de la Bibl. Nationale: Les monnaies mérovingiennes* (1892), pp. xxxi–xxxv and pl. I). Procopius says that from this time the barbaric princes presided over games of the circus at Arles (cf. Martin, as above, p. 22). Theudebert gave himself the title of Victor, which at first seems undeserved by his campaign. But it appears that though he felt obliged to withdraw, a part of Venetia, much of Liguria and the Cottian Alps, remained in his possession. See Procopius, as above, iv. 24, and Hodgkin's account. Justinian protested, but these parts of Italy were still held by Theudebald.

[1] III. 29. It was first called the church of S. Vincent. Afterwards it became known as S. Germain-des-Prés (vol. II, p. 512). The people of Saragossa are said to have presented Childebert with a relic of S. Vincent to hasten his departure; this became one of the principal treasures of the church.

[2] Agathias, I. 4.

[3] As Pfister remarks, to ascribe these plans to Theudebert is to credit a vigorous barbarian, resentful of Imperial patronage, with the qualities of a Charles the Great or an Otto (as above, p. 126). Had he possessed such qualities the project might perhaps have been less impossible than Agathias suggests (*Hist.* i. 1 and 4).

[4] i. e., in his dealing with the peoples of Auvergne and Verdun (III. 34).

gives him credit for clemency and justice, for munificence to the Church and to the poor. But he died unpopular through his attempt to subject not only the Gallo-Roman but also the Frank to a regulated taxation;[1] and whatever his ability and his capacity for wide views, his perfidious foreign policy in Italy reveals him as a man without stability of principle.

He was succeeded by Theudebald, his son by Deuteria, the Gallo-Roman lady who left her husband for his company (cf. above, p. 50). The young prince was but thirteen years of age, and his chance of resisting his uncles' greed would have been small had not the Ripuarian notables declared themselves ready to defend his cause; his position was thus secured, not because these men felt deep attachment to the royal house, but because the accession of a minor, who could not threaten their interests, suited their policy of an aristocratic domination (cf. p. 196).

Theudebald during his short reign was a cipher, living in the royal villas but not holding the reins of power. The chief men of the Ripuarians and the Alamanni led their forces whither they would, regardless of the king;[2] the Italian expedition of the two Alamannic brothers, Buccelin (Bukhelin, Butilin) and Leuthar, in 553–4, was a notable event in the history of the southern peninsula. Nominally in response to an appeal from the Goths for aid against the Empire, they marched to Parma and defeated the imperial troops; they then divided their army into two bodies which advanced down the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts, Leuthar following the former route, Buccelin the latter. The story is not told by Gregory;[3] we derive our knowledge chiefly from the Byzantine historian Agathias.

---

[1] His brother Lothar sought rather to increase his revenues by taxing the Church. This attempt was frustrated by Injuriosus, bishop of Tours, who had behind him the terror of S. Martin's name (IV. 2); the fear of the great saint caused the king to desist. The Merovingian rulers were never able to effect a systematic and general taxation of Church property.

[2] The Ostrogoths sent an embassy in 553, begging the king's aid, which was declined (Agathias, i. 5). Cf. Hodgkin, as above, v, p. 14. The expedition of Buccelin and Leuthar is described by Hodgkin, as above, pp. 16 ff.

[3] The death of Buccelin is mentioned in IV. 9; his previous victories had been briefly touched upon in III. 32. Agathias describes the invasion in the early chapters of his second book. Cf. also Paul the Deacon, ii. 2, and Marius of Aventicum, *Chronica, ad ann. 555* (M. G. H., *Auct. Antiq.* xi). If Theudebert had still been on the throne, he might have won a durable success in Italy by putting the whole weight of his force against Narses in his hard struggle with the Ostrogothic kings.

The raid ended by the defeat of Buccelin at Casilinum, and the short-lived triumph of the imperial armies under the skilled leadership of Narses ; the Franks now evacuated Italy, leaving the East Roman power triumphant, but soon to be threatened by fresh barbaric invaders.

The feeble Theudebald dying in 554–5 after a brief reign of seven years, his uncle Lothar occupied the Ripuarian throne without any consideration for the possible claims of his brother Childebert. He may have argued that as he himself had four sons, while Childebert was without male issue, the latter had no need of further territory ; but his brother took offence.[1] At first the new inheritance brought little to Lothar but trouble and danger. The absence of Buccelin and Leuthar in Italy had encouraged the Saxons to rise, and the king only subdued them after a bloody encounter on the Weser. In 555 they refused tribute to the Franks, but on the approach of Lothar's army were intimidated, and offered terms which the king was inclined to accept. But the Ripuarian notables, asserting themselves against the royal power, used threatening language to the king, whom they forced to advance against his will. In the engagement which followed, the Saxons proved their strength, and Lothar withdrew to the Rhine, glad to have obtained terms of peace (IV. 9 (14)). The Saxon rising marked the beginning of the long and stubborn opposition between this confederacy of tribes, standing for northern paganism, and the Franks as champions of Christianity, an opposition destined long to outlast the Merovingian dynasty. It also gave rise to one of those open outbreaks on the part of the Ripuarian notables against royal dictation which became frequent in the later history of the Austrasian kingdom.

The discomfiture of Lothar in Saxony led to a rising against him in Central France, where, especially in Auvergne, Gallo-Roman national feeling was strong. The king had sent Chramn, his favourite son, into this region. The debaucheries of the young prince had disgusted the citizens of Clermont,[2] and Chramn established himself in Poitiers. From here he intrigued with his uncle Childebert, king of Paris, who was indignant at the manner in which Lothar had ignored his right to a share in the Ripuarian kingdom. He received support from Limoges, and was becoming formidable, so that his father sent his two brothers, Charibert and Guntram, against him (IV. 10 (16)). By cleverly using a rumour of Lothar's death, Chramn caused them to hasten home; he himself joined Childebert at Paris, and this king now invading Champagne, the situation of Lothar seemed almost hopeless, for the Saxons and Thuringians at the same time began another rising. But the wheel of fortune suddenly turned. In 545 Childebert died of disease (IV. 13 (20)), the Saxons were repulsed, and Lothar found himself sole king of all the Frankish territories. The rebellious Chramn was now driven to dire straits; he took refuge with the ruling chief of the free Bretons. But the Bretons were defeated by Lothar's army; their chief was slain, and Chramn was burned by his father's order in a hut in which he was confined (IV. 10 (16), 13, 20). The slaying of his favourite son seems to have preyed on Lothar's mind. Afterwards, at Tours, he showed his contrition by restoring the church of S. Martin, recently damaged by fire, and by making rich gifts (IV. 14 (21)). But soon afterwards, while hunting in the forest of Cuise, he was attacked by sickness, and died in the royal *villa* of Compiègne (561–2) on the anniversary of Chramn's death. He was buried at Soissons in the crypt of the church of S. Médard, still in existence to-day. His death would in itself have been small loss to the country, for his character was unscrupulous and brutal (pp. 48–9). But at least the concentration of power in the hands of one man reduced the chances of civil wars. He left four sons behind him, and the lands over which he ruled were equally divided. The dissensions which followed the division of the kingdom of Clovis were inevitably repeated when Charibert, Guntram, Chilperic, and Sigibert began to reign. These were the discords which Gregory of Tours bewails in the solemn prologue to his fifth book, for we have now almost reached the time in which the bishop of Tours enters upon the scene as the contemporary and the acquaintance of the chief actors; soon after this point his pages lose the dryness of the chronicler and the uncertain tone of the writer who repeats legends, to acquire the liveliness of history written by a good eye-witness. Now begin the personal episodes, the familiar touches, the action and reaction of human relationships which make the difference between chronicle and history. The narrative may have no more style and no more method than before, but it has what is better : it has life.

---

[1] Gregory only says (VI. 9) that on the death of Theudebald Lothar 'received his kingdom'.

[2] IV. 8 (13). He was also guilty of arbitrary exercise of power.

The legitimate division of Lothar's kingdom was preceded by an act of aggression on the part of Chilperic. He seized the royal treasure then at the *villa* of Berny,[1] using part of it to win over the local notables. Accompanied by them, he made himself master of Paris, and prepared to assert his claims, occupying the royal residence of Childebert at the Roman *Thermae*. But the general feeling of the Franks was probably against him ; his three brothers drove him from the city, and forced him to accept his due share in the legitimate division described on a later page (p. 142). Though after that division (IV. 15 (22)) the kings all swore upon relics of the saints to respect each other's boundaries, in a very short time Chilperic, now styled king of Soissons, saw and seized an opportunity of violating his oath. The Avars (called by Gregory Huns), diverted from the Byzantine Empire, had entered Germany, and now (565) threatened Sigibert's kingdom. Sigibert, a man of warlike temperament, advanced beyond his borders and encountered the invaders on German soil, where he inflicted a defeat followed by a peace. It was this absence in Germany which provided the treacherous Chilperic with the chance for which he had been waiting. While his brother was maintaining the common cause of the Franks against the Asiatic invader, he marched into a land stripped of its defenders, and took possession of Reims (IV. 16 (23)). It was an act of treachery both personal and national, and deserved condign punishment. Sigibert, returning victorious and indignant, drove his dishonourable brother from Ripuarian territory, and seized his capital of Soissons, taking prisoner Chilperic's son Theudebert. But his elder brothers Charibert and Guntram persuaded him to abandon ideas of vengeance ; and being of a generous nature (*ut erat clemens*), he set Theudebert free (565–6).[2] His lands being now at peace, he sought a consort worthy to share his throne, for as Gregory tells us, he saw with shame the unequal alliances made by his brothers, and their infatuation for concubines (IV. 20 (27)). He asked and obtained the hand of Brunhild, daughter of Athanagild, king of the Visigoths, that Brunhild whose history was bound up for half a century with that of the Austrasian Franks. The princess came northward with rich treasure, and the wedding, described in mediocre verse by Fortunatus, who was present at the scene, took place in 566 in the royal town of Metz.[1]

---

[1] This *villa*, formerly regarded as situated at Braine, is now considered to have been in the canton of Vic-sur-Aisne, arrondissement of Soissons (Longnon, *Géogr. de la Gaule au VIe siècle*, p. 401).

[2] IV. 16 (23). Theudebert swore never to bear arms against Sigibert, but broke his oath with all the ease of his perfidious father.

In the next year died Charibert, king of Paris (IV. 19 (26)), the oldest of the four brothers and father of Queen Bertha of Kent; his end, in Gregory's opinion, was not unconnected with his unsatisfactory attitude towards ecclesiastical property, 'for he was a man who hated the clergy and neglected the churches'. His death was followed by an episode throwing an interesting light on life in the sixth century. One of Charibert's queens, Theudechild, originally a servant and the daughter of a shepherd, took possession of her late lord's movable treasures, and sent King Guntram a message, in which she offered him her hand and all her wealth. Guntram, pretending to accept, took the second but declined the first, consigning the ex-queen to a convent at Arles, where she soon had reason to rue her forwardness. As Charibert had died without sons, his lands were divided between the three surviving brothers, the partition introducing all manner of complications and ensuring occasions of future discord (p. 139).

Sigibert, by winning a royal princess, had achieved a standing for his court which immediately roused the envy of the jealous Chilperic. Nothing would serve but that he should do likewise, and by fixing his choice on Brunhild's elder sister Galswinth, he thought most effectively to eclipse his respectable brother. He had already espoused more than one queen. Audovera, the mother of three sons, had been supplanted by her serving-maid, the notorious Fredegund, who alone knew how to bind this king's fickle affections (see p. 73). For the moment, this 'enemy of God and men', as Gregory styles her not without justice, suffered herself to be put away that Chilperic might pose as the equal to Sigibert in virtue. She seemed to acquiesce, but was only biding her own time. Galswinth left her family and home with anxious forebodings; Fortunatus tells at length the story of her departure from Toledo, how again and again she embraced her mother, how omens foreshadowed disaster.[1] For her there was no help: Chilperic had promised as her dower the five cities of Limoges, Cahors, Bordeaux, Béarn and Cieutat,[2] and the eyes of Athanagild were perhaps blinded by the splendour of the position offered to his daughter. She came into Rouen on a car plated with silver; at her wedding all the chief subjects of Chilperic swore loyalty and allegiance; there were banquets and general rejoicings. The Visigothic princess occupied the centre of the scene, but probably in some less conspicuous position the displaced Fredegund was looking on, confident in her own subversive power. For a short time the king seemed to take pleasure in the company of his royal bride 'for she had brought him rich treasure'. But soon Fredegund regained her lost ground, and was taken back to favour. Galswinth, finding such rivalry intolerable, asked that she might return to her home, leaving all her treasure behind her (IV. 21 (28)). The king might have consented, but it may be guessed that spoliation and indignity were not enough for Fredegund. One morning Galswinth was found dead in her bed; she was not to be the last to die for standing in Fredegund's way. It was pretended that the death was natural; but Brunhild had no doubt that it was murder, a view which Gregory clearly shared; from this hour the furious hatred of the two queens embroiled their kingdoms by recurrent outbreaks of an interminable feud.[3] In an age in which human life had no sanctity, and morality was of small account, they tolerated any crime tending to sate their vengeance. Sigibert was urged by Brunhild into war with Chilperic, whom he soon defeated and held in his power. But through the intervention of his brother Guntram, a *wergeld* was substituted for the penalty of death; the cities given by Chilperic to Galswinth were to be handed over to the Austrasian queen; the bad king's short period of respectability had cost him dear, but at least he saved his life. The reappearance of the Avars on the eastern frontiers, and the Lombard invasion in the south, really saved Chilperic. Sigibert was obliged to take the field to defend his dominions. On this occasion he was less successful than before ; his army beat a retreat, and he himself was taken prisoner ; his ill success is put down by Gregory to oriental magic. He extricated himself from an awkward position by his personal address and skill in knowing when to give.[1] Soon afterwards, as if unbalanced by this ill-concealed defeat, he attempted to seize Guntram's cities in Provence, and was ignominiously repulsed (IV. 23 (30)) ; this action was one of two which darken the fair name of Sigibert. Guntram had hardly rid his territory of his brother's forces, when it was attacked from another side. The Lombards, who in 568 had overrun Northern Italy (p. 179), now crossed the Alps and attacked Burgundy (570, 571) ; though repulsed by the Patrician Amatus, they returned with much plunder, after sacking cities and devastating the country through which they passed (IV. 29 (42)). The next year they appeared again. But in the Gallo-Roman, Eunius Mummolus, now in command of the Franco-Burgundian army, they encountered an able general, of whose varied fortunes the History has much to relate. They were disastrously beaten at Embrun ; another of their expeditions met with like ill success (IV. 30 (44)).

---

[1] Fortunatus, *Carm.* vi. 2: *De nuptiis Sigiberti regis et Brunichildis reginae.*

---

[1] IV. 21 (18).

[2] This is mentioned in the Pact of Andelot (IX. 20).

[3] IV. 21 (28). Gregory imputes the guilt to Chilperic, and says that the queen was strangled or suffocated by his orders: *Ad extremum enim suggillare iussit a puero* But Fredegund probably instigated the crime.

Chilperic obtained a breathing-space of two years by the distraction of his brothers in these foreign wars. But in 573 this incorrigible king seized the occasion to occupy, through his second son Chlodovech, Sigibert's rich lands of Touraine and Poitou on which he had always cast envious eyes ; so began a period of incessant civil wars lasting for some forty years (573–613). Guntram, who was usually for law and order, now agreed with Sigibert and sent Mummolus against the usurper (IV. 31 (45)). Chlodovech was driven away, and Poitiers, which resisted, was crushed.[2] Guntram did more. He attempted to establish a permanent peace through the influence of a Council of bishops, convened in the neutral city of Paris (IV. 33 (47)). But the voice of the Church was unheeded. In the next year Chilperic dispatched his eldest son

---

[1] *Ut erat elegans et versutus, quos non potuit superare virtute proelii superavit arte donandi* (IV. 22 (29)).

[2] Chlodovech, who had withdrawn to Bordeaux, was hunted out of that city with horns and trumpets 'like a stag' (IV. 33 (47)).

Theudebert south of the Loire. This young prince, who on being set free by Sigibert had sworn never to take arms against him, now seized Tours and Poitiers, and inflicted on Touraine, the Limousin, and other regions all the horrors of barbaric war.

So wanton an outrage infuriated Sigibert beyond measure, and brought out once more the worse side of his nature. He now, in his passion for revenge, committed a crime against the Frankish race. He summoned to his standards the fierce pagan Germans from beyond the Rhine, and marched with them against Neustria (IV. 34 (49)). No action could have been better calculated to undo the great work of Clovis. His action drove Guntram to the side of Chilperic; but the king of Burgundy, timid and unstable as ever, allowed Sigibert undisputed passage across the Seine. Chilperic retreated to Alluie on the Loire, where Sigibert followed him. The king of Soissons now offered peace and reparation, and his prayer was heard. Germanus, bishop of Paris, had written earnestly to Queen Brunhild [1] beseeching her not to fan the flame of a war so ruinous to Gaul and the Frankish nation. The finer side of the queen's character may have been touched by this appeal by the noblest of the bishops; she granted his request, and Sigibert, perhaps ashamed in his heart of the alliance which had wrought such devastation, set himself to appease, if with difficulty, the fierce German looters, baulked of their expected spoil.[2] It was different with Fredegund, whose nature had no such noble side; her one thought was to rekindle war and take revenge. Such was the fascination exerted by the 'Frankish Medea'[3] that Guntram, who had arranged the peace, was soon talked into an alliance with the king of Soissons, the sole purpose of which was another war. Chilperic moved upon Reims, and once more dispatched Theudebert south of the

---

[1] The letter is extant; it is printed in M. G. H., *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolingici aevi*, tom. I (ed. W. Gundlach, 1892), no. 9, p. 122. *Germanus peccator* addresses himself: *Dominae clementissimae et nobis semper piissimae et in Christo Sanctae Ecclesiae filiae Brunehildae reginae*. The bishop deplores the way in which kings and peoples are rushing to incur the wrath of God. One sentence may be quoted: *Inhonesta victoria est fratrem vincere*.

[2] The *versutia* of Sigibert again appeared here. Until he had returned home, he used fair words; after his return he proceeded by lapidation: *verbis lenibus demulsit, multos ex eis postea lapidibus obrui praecipiens*.

[3] Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, p. 51.

Loire (IV. 35 (50)). At this requital of his lenience, Sigibert's rage knew no bounds. He forgot his contrition and repented of his repentance. Once more he called in the pagan Teutons, determined this time to make an end. At the head of his Austrasian and German forces he marched into Paris, regardless of the oath which he had sworn, and of its sanctions. His generals, Godegisel and the notorious Guntram Boso, were sent to Touraine, where they overcame and slew Theudebert. The vacillating Guntram, alarmed at the course of events, made a separate peace. The cause of Chilperic seemed lost; he withdrew within the walls of Tournai, looking for nothing but death at the hands of his infuriated brother. There was a respite while Sigibert, disregarding the warning of Germanus, repaired to Vitry to receive the allegiance of the Western Franks preparatory to the final ruin of his brother. Nothing but some desperate counsel could save the husband of Fredegund from ruin.

But Fredegund was at his side and the desperate counsel was forthcoming. This indomitable woman decided that what the sword of the soldier failed to do, the dagger of the assassin must accomplish. There were always at her beck and call young men infatuated by her beauty. Two of these she now summoned, and, remembering her arts, prepared a potion for them which filled them with reckless daring. They were bidden to go to Vitry, get access to Sigibert, and plunge their poisoned *scramasaxes* (p. 232) in his body. They followed her commands to the letter. When they reached Vitry, Sigibert was being carried through the assembly, borne aloft upon a shield after the Frankish manner. They managed to approach him and stabbed him as he bent down towards them to hear a request which they preferred. He fell dying to the ground, and in the general uproar which followed the murderers were themselves cut down (IV. 36 (51)). But the work of their patroness was done. It was the year 575.

The death of Sigibert at the age of forty was an event of fatal import in the history of the Merovingians. The king of steadiest character was removed, leaving as heir a child of five. The throne of Neustria remained to a ruler without principle, enslaved by the most wicked woman of the age. The widowed Brunhild and her boy were for the moment in the power of this merciless pair whose influence, if the Austrasian kingdom were seized by Chilperic, would soon dominate the kindly but unstable Guntram. If, on the other hand, the royal prisoners escaped, there was the prospect of a yet more pitiless feud between the wronged Brunhild and her rival, during which the land of Gaul could expect nothing but disaster.

The second of these alternatives came to pass. The young prince, now Childebert II, was carried off from Paris to Austrasia by Duke Gundobald, who brought him by swift stages to Metz; there he was acclaimed as king by the notables at the feast of Christmas 575.[1] This action was taken from mixed motives. One may have been a feeling of loyalty to the royal house. But a second probably exerted a greater influence. Sigibert had been suspected of seeking to strengthen the royal power to the prejudice of the magnates and the diminution of their rights and privileges. They regarded him as too amenable to his queen's advice, and suspected him of a plan to subject them to taxation.[2] Under an infant king, guarded and governed by one of their own body, the dangers threatening their interests would be checked, and their ancient liberties preserved. They, therefore, named a 'mayor of the palace' to protect their interests at Court. This was nothing less than a revolutionary step. In the earlier period of Frankish history the 'mayor' represented the king's interest against the notables; now the position was reversed: he represented the interest of the notables against that of the Court. This being the policy of the aristocratic party, it is the more remarkable that they should have been so short-sighted as to permit the recall of Brunhild after a brief absence (p. 118); they must equally have misread the character of the queen, underestimated her powers, and misunderstood her policy. The acclamation of Childebert II by the Austrasians destroyed any hopes which Chilperic may have entertained of succeeding to the inheritance of Sigibert. He therefore turned his attention once more to those coveted lands south of the Loire which he had so often invaded, but never managed to hold. He sent Roccolen with a force recruited in Maine, to take possession of Touraine, and demand the surrender of the Austrasian duke, Guntram Boso, in sanctuary in S. Martin's, who had slain the king's eldest son, Theudebert. When Roccolen made his demand, Gregory firmly asserted the privilege of the Church, and refused to obey. At the feast of the Epiphany in 576, Roccolen accompanied the procession from the cathedral to the church of S. Martin, proposing on his arrival to seize the person of Guntram. He failed in his object. According to Gregory, a mysterious fear took hold upon him, with the result that he withdrew to Poitiers, where shortly afterwards he died; but the historian ingenuously adds that he had partaken too greedily of young rabbits. Chilperic next sent Merovech, the elder of his two surviving sons by Audovera. This expedition was likewise doomed to failure. While in Paris, Merovech had fallen in love with Brunhild; the widowed queen of Sigibert was beautiful, and probably not far from his own age. He now determined to use the present opportunity of marrying her before Chilperic could interfere. Brunhild had been taken to Rouen, where she was rather under surveillance than actually a prisoner. The bishop of that city, Praetextatus, was devoted to the interests of Merovech, whom he had himself baptized. The prince, after a feint of action in Touraine, hurried off to Rouen, where he besought the bishop to unite him to the queen, though she was his aunt by marriage, and the union was forbidden by the canons. Praetextatus was imprudent enough to do what he was asked, thereby sealing his own fate; for Fredegund not only hated Brunhild, but desired the removal of her stepson from the path of her own children. The death of Merovech was rendered yet more certain by this imprudent action. Chilperic soon heard the news, and appeared upon the scene. The newly-married pair had taken refuge in a church, but were lured out by the king, who pretended to accept the accomplished fact, and quoted Scripture to his purpose. He succeeded in his object of putting them asunder, and returned home with his son, leaving Brunhild in some doubt as to her position. Ever pertinacious in his covetousness, he sent Chlodovech, the younger brother of Merovech, to fulfil the task in which that prince had failed. Chlodovech was not to be particular in confining himself to the Austrasian territories in Aquitaine; he was to treat the cities and lands of the good King Guntram in just the same way as those nominally belonging to the young Childebert II; the previous vacillations of the Burgundian king had doubtless provoked Chilperic to this contemptuous usage of his elder brother. It seemed safe, because Guntram was embarrassed by a new Lombard attack. But he had reckoned without Guntram's general Mummolus, who swiftly disposed of the Lombards and suddenly appeared in Aquitaine. After a series of engagements he defeated Chilperic's commander, Duke Desiderius, and recovered Guntram's cities. His rapid success probably suggested to Chilperic the wisdom of better relations with Austrasia; it was about this time that the Austrasian mayor of the palace made the request that, in accordance with the wish of the boy-king Childebert, Brunhild should be set at liberty and allowed to return to Metz. The Neustrian king agreed, whether with the consent of Fredegund or in her despite we are not told. It was at any rate a step which in no way conduced to the peace of Gaul. Brunhild re-entered her late husband's kingdom and took the leading place in her son's court.

---

[1] V. 1; 'Fredegar' c. 72. 'Fredegar' relates that the little boy was carried in a game-bag.

[2] The position of the Frankish aristocratic party was very strong. The only way really to triumph over them was the 'thorough' method adopted by the Visigothic king Leuvigild in Spain, who simply wiped them out for a generation (John of Biclar, *Chron.* year 578). Sigibert was not the man to adopt such methods against his own people; but he may have been tempted by the one alternative of forcing the aristocracy to pay new taxes. The great landholders were already so rich as to be a standing danger to the kings; when Mummolus died, his treasures were found to include two hundred and fifty talents of silver, and over thirty of gold (VII. 39 (40)). The action taken by the aristocrats after Sigibert's murder suggests that they had no intention to put up with more taxation; and though Brunhild all her life sought to compel them, she never succeeded in her object.

Merovech enjoyed no such fortune. He was charged with complicity in a recent revolt, and kept a prisoner. It was then decided that he should receive the tonsure, and he was sent under a guard to the monastery of Saint Calais, near Le Mans (V. 14). But he was rescued on the way by a body of men including his faithful servant Gailen, and a message reached him from Guntram Boso, advising him to take sanctuary in the church of S. Martin at Tours, where he himself still was. There may have been treachery on the part of the faithless Boso, who was believed to have killed the prince's elder brother. He probably knew that the credit of a deed which exposed him to Chilperic's vengeance brought him the good will of Fredegund; she believed him to have rid her of a stepson, and he may well have counted on increasing that good will by further service of the same kind. Merovech followed the advice given him, and joined Boso at Tours. Chilperic at once sent orders that he was to be expelled; but as on the occasion when Roccolen had come with a like demand, Gregory returned a firm refusal (V. 8). Boso seems on one occasion to have succeeded in persuading the prince to leave the precincts, but as nothing happened[1] and time passed, he began to think that it might serve his ends better to link his fortunes with those of Merovech instead of betraying him. They fled together in 577, the prince making for Austrasia to seek safety with Brunhild. He had a series of adventures. Caught by King Guntram's duke, Herpo, he escaped into sanctuary in the church of S. Germanus in the territory of Autun, and, after two months, managed to reach the Austrasian kingdom. The queen welcomed her second husband only to lose him; the Austrasian aristocracy, already suspicious of her, declined to receive the fugitive.[2] While Chilperic took vengeance on Gregory by ordering the devastation of states belonging to S. Martin, Merovech concealed himself near Reims. But his fate was not long delayed. He fell into a trap laid by Fredegund, or by persons acting for her at Térouanne. Seeing himself without hope of escape, he called upon his servant Gailen to run him through with his dagger (V. 12 (18)). Two of Fredegund's stepsons were thus accounted for; there remained only Chlodovech, the youngest of the three. But first she sought the ruin of Praetextatus, bishop of Rouen, whose action in marrying Merovech and Brunhild had roused her deep resentment. He was brought before an episcopal Council at Paris and accused of having transgressed the canons by uniting a nephew and an aunt; other charges were added, and Chilperic joined personally in the prosecution. The bishop was expelled from his diocese and exiled to Jersey, Gregory having courageously intervened to spare him a heavier sentence (V. 12 (18)). If Praetextatus was innocent on other counts, his confession of guilt argues great weakness of character.

The politics of Gaul were now more than ever affected by the feud between Brunhild and Fredegund. Brunhild's party for a time gaining the ascendant in Austrasia, Guntram, now childless, decided to ally himself with that kingdom and adopt the young Childebert II as his own heir (V. 11 (17)). After the ceremony of adoption had taken place, a summons was sent to Chilperic from the allied kingdoms, demanding restoration of their territories unlawfully annexed. But the king of Neustria was probably aware that the strength of the Austrasian aristocracy was unbroken, and that Brunhild's power rested on insecure foundations. He ignored the summons and, as a gesture of bravado, occupied himself by building amphitheatres for circus games at Soissons and Paris. He was now the despot of nearly all Western France, and began to oppress by taxation not only the Gallo-Romans, but the free Franks. If cities resisted, there was brutal repression; the individual objectors, even abbots and priests, were tortured and put to death (V. 21 (28)). He was courting the fate of tyrants; and a series of natural calamities occurring in these years seemed to presage disasters. Earthquakes, landslides, disastrous hailstorms, and fires swiftly succeeded each other, and in the end came epidemic. Chilperic himself was attacked, but recovered. But first one of his sons by Fredegund died, and afterwards the other two were stricken down. Their illness caused the sole act of compunction recorded of Fredegund. We have seen that her chief virtue was a devotion to her offspring. As in the furtherance of their interests she was ready to destroy every possible rival, so to preserve them from their peril she was prepared to make sacrifice even of the chief source of her riches. The story of the casting upon the fire of the tax registers from her own cities is dramatically told by Gregory. Chilperic, as ever, did as she bade, and followed her example (V. 26 (34)).

---

[1] The prince was persuaded to go out 'with hawk and hound', when he was probably to be singled out and slain. But those appointed to do the deed seem not to have discovered his identity, and he returned safely: *a nemine Merovechus nocitus est* (V. 8).

[2] V. 8: *ab Austrasiis non est collectus.*

Nevertheless, the boys died (580). In a moment the queen's compunction was changed into fury. She was determined that as her own sons had been carried off, not a single stepson should survive; the manner in which she caused Chlodovech, the last remaining son of Audovera, to be dispatched shows her callous and ruthless spirit at its worst (V. 29 (39)). Even the existence of her former mistress, his mother, harmlessly dwelling in a cloister, annoyed her revengeful heart; Audovera was murdered in her convent. His sister Basina escaped assassination, but was in her turn forced to take the veil at Poitiers, where she was destined to attain an unpleasant notoriety.

Meanwhile, Fredegund devised a new plan to harass Brunhild. It was probably at her instigation that Chilperic now offered to adopt the young Childebert II, for she well knew that any connexion with the royal house of Neustria would disgust the Austrasian queen (VI. 3). She knew also that the Austrasian notables were growing jealous of the queen-mother, and she had won adherents among them. The scheme accorded with Neustrian policy at this time which aimed at crushing Guntram with Austrasian aid, and then annexing Austrasia itself; Chilperic would thus attain the position once held by his father as sole king of Gaul. This policy had a momentary success. The rebellious Austrasian magnates combined against the one man who stood firm for Brunhild, Lupus duke of Champagne. They would have overborne him by violence; but Brunhild, whose personal bravery was equal to her pride, threw herself in their path, and succeeded in preventing bloodshed, though Lupus saw that he was helpless and fled to Guntram's territory (VI. 4). The alliance between the Austrasians and Chilperic was formed all the more easily, because Guntram's retention of Childebert's share in the *civitas* of Marseilles had given deep offence (VI. 22 (31)). The king of Neustria in two campaigns seized Guntram's cities south of the Loire, though he failed against the Basques of the Pyrenean slopes (582, 583). But now, as so often in the Merovingian wars, there came a sudden reversal of fortunes: Guntram rose and Chilperic went down. The cause lay in the instability of Austrasian politics. The leaders of the notables had not reckoned with a certain national feeling, outraged by Chilperic's recent seizures of Austrasian cities, and no longer prepared to endure the Neustrian alliance. A part of the army, refusing to support a factious quarrel, so dangerously threatened the intriguing Egidius, bishop of Reims, at this time in the camp, that he leaped in a panic on his horse and took to ignominious flight.[1] Guntram owed much to this outbreak of Austrasian patriotism, but something to his own activities. His army surprised that of Chilperic, inflicting on it a serious defeat. The way now lay open to a fresh alliance between himself and Childebert, and he at last restored the half of Marseilles (VI. 24 (33)). The fortunes of Neustria had sunk to a dangerous level ; Fredegund's scheme was thwarted ; and about this time she had to bear the loss of her fourth and last son.

---

[1] VI. 22 (31): *tanto timore pertirritus, ut unam caligam de pede elapsam allegare non curaret.*

Chilperic prepared for the worst ; he withdrew to Cambrai, and ordered his dukes and counts to follow his example, keeping within the walls of fortified cities. But once more fortune completely changed. Childebert, now fourteen years of age, instead of actively supporting Guntram, turned his arms in another direction. He had received from Maurice Tiberius fifty thousand gold pieces (*solidi*) to attack the Lombards, the Empire always hoping with Frankish aid to recover the whole of Italy. As was ever the case, when the Franks invaded the peninsula, they did their friends no good (VI. 28 (42)) ; the Lombards offering money in their turn, Childebert took it and returned home, not even troubling to answer the expostulations of the Byzantine Emperor. But Chilperic had been relieved from the worst of his anxieties, and was able to occupy himself with domestic affairs. He dispatched his daughter Rigunth on her memorable journey to Spain to wed the Visigothic prince Recared, with a great train of wagons full of treasure (VI. 32 (45)). While she was on her way the king, returning from the chase at his domain of Chelles, not far from Paris, was stabbed by an assassin as he dismounted from his horse in the twilight (VI. 33 (46)). The murder may have been, as Gregory himself almost implies (VIII. 5), an act of public revenge prompted by the wrath of a misgoverned people. 'What slew Chilperic ?' he said to King Guntram at Orleans ; 'his own wickedness.' It may have been done to please Brunhild, who had obvious reasons for wishing him removed and an unforgotten motive for revenge.[1] But at this time the sister of Galswinth had not accustomed herself to crimes of violence. A common rumour laid the murder at the door darkened by so many others : it was said that Fredegund had taken as her lover Landeric, a Neustrian of high place, and that on the discovery of the intrigue by the king, she saw at once that it must be his death or her own.[1] Fredegund herself accused Eberulf, Chilperic's chamberlain, who had enraged her by refusing to continue in her service. At the news of her father's murder, the unfortunate Rigunth found herself robbed and deserted; there was no course open to her but to return home in humiliation.

---

[1] This is the version given by 'Fredegar' (c. 93), who states that the murderer was one Falco, acting on behalf of Brunhild. Guntram accused bishop Theodore of Marseilles of being an accessory, but the charge seems frivolous and prompted by personal animosity (VIII. 5).

Fredegund met the tide of danger which followed the murder with the energy characteristic of her nature. She at once took sanctuary in Paris with all the royal treasure on which she could lay hands (VII. 4). The armies of Childebert and Guntram, now united, closed in on the city. She divided the two kings by imploring Guntram to act as guardian to the infant Lothar, now Lothar II. Guntram, always sensible to flattery, agreed; Paris received him, but closed her gates on Childebert. The king of Burgundy saw in the new state of affairs not only an increase of prestige, but a prospect of material advantage; by taking over his nephew's kingdom he would find some profit for himself, as had already been the case when he had become guardian to his other nephew. He pointed out to Childebert that all claims on the part of Austrasia had been forfeited long ago when Sigibert had entered Paris during his war with Chilperic, thus violating a pact between himself and his brothers. He refused to surrender Fredegund, bitterly accused by Childebert as murderess of nearly all his family, but promised to refer questions in dispute to a conference to be held at an early date. Fredegund herself, though for the present ostensibly using her influence in favour of Guntram, was no more disposed than Brunhild to admit his claim to absolute mastery in the kingdom simply on the ground that he was the young king's father by adoption. She prepared to oppose him whenever favourable chance should offer.

When the conference was held (VII. 14), Childebert and his mother destroyed in advance all prospect of a successful result, by sending as Austrasian representatives two men peculiarly unacceptable to Guntram, Egidius, bishop of Reims, for years an intriguer with Chilperic in the interests of the Austrasian aristocracy against the crown, and that notorious character, Guntram Boso, known to have brought the pretender Gundovald[1] from Constantinople. Childebert's demand for the restoration of Tours with the cities of Aquitaine and the surrender of Fredegund sounded ill to the king of Burgundy from lips like these. He wrought himself into a fury, and denounced both men as liars and traitors ; there was nothing to be done but close the conference. As they left his presence, the Austrasians warned Guntram 'to beware of the axe which had slain his brothers '.[2] The king's reply was to have them pelted, on their departure from the *villa*, with filth and rubbish. But some impression was made upon him by their words. Ceasing to entertain the widow of Chilperic at his table, he sent her away to Rueil, near Rouen (VII. 19). The angry woman regarded her removal as a success for Brunhild, and sent out an assassin to try his fortune against her. The man was seized, examined, and contemptuously sent back to his patroness, who requited him for his failure by ordering his hands and feet to be cut off (VII. 20).

---

[1] This is the version in the *Gesta Francorum.* The story is that Chilperic having gone out to the chase for the day, unexpectedly returned and entered the chamber of his queen, who did not look up as he entered, but addressed him as Landeric. The king turned and went out in silence, Fredegund discovering his identity as he went.

---

[1] Gundovald claimed to be the son of Lothar I, by some woman unnamed by Gregory. King Guntram declared him, on the contrary, the son of a palace serf, a miller or weaver (VII. 14). When brought before his reputed father, he was disowned ; but his claims were to some extent recognized by Childebert I, king of Paris, who kept him at his court and treated him as a prince. Lothar, however, demanded his surrender, cut off his long hair and banished him. He is said to have been reduced to great straits and to have become a painter (VII. 36) to earn his living. After the death of Lothar, Charibert, the oldest of his sons, sent for Gundovald and gave him once more the position of a prince. This gave offence to Sigibert, to whom Charibert weakly surrendered his reputed brother. Gundovald's head was again shorn, and he was sent as a prisoner to Cologne. Thence he escaped into Italy, and took refuge with the famous Narses, then representing the Emperor Justinian in that country, by whom he was well received. He married, but on the death of his wife went, about 565, to Constantinople, where he lived for fifteen years, receiving honourable treatment. His position in the Byzantine capital caused the discontented Frankish aristocracy to cast their eyes on him as a potential instrument against any of the recognized sons of Lothar. When the notables, in 582, thought the time ripe for action they sent Guntram Boso, as noted above, to bring him over, the chief plotter being Mummolus, Guntram's former general, who had quarrelled with his master and was now settled in Austrasian territory at Avignon. At Marseilles, Boso robbed the pretender, who not long afterwards had to lie concealed on an island in the Mediterranean. Gundovald's adventure must have had the support of the Emperor Maurice if he left Constantinople furnished with a treasure rich enough to tempt Boso.

[2] Neither Sigibert nor Chilperic had been slain by the axe, the recognized instrument of summary justice ; they had been stabbed with *scramasaxes*. The envoys were speaking in general terms, and warning Guntram against the possible results of unwise policy which they may have construed as opposition to the aristocratic party. If so, they implied that both Sigibert and Chilperic died at the instigation of that party.

Guntram was now in appearance arbiter of all Gaul, as recognized guardian of both his nephews. But his position was in reality precarious, not so much through the hatred or suspicion of the two queens, as through the growing opposition of the magnates against the royal power of which at the moment he was the mainstay. This opposition had always been strongest in Austrasia, where the feeling of loyalty to the Salian royal house was naturally weaker than in the kingdom containing the old capital of Clovis. It was on Austrasian initiative that Gundovald had been introduced in 582 as a tool to be used against such of the kings as most threatened the privileges of the aristocracy; at the moment, Guntram was, therefore, their obvious mark. The pretender, if formally accepted as the legitimate son of Lothar I, would be entitled to a fifth share of Lothar's dominions, which had been divided among his other sons in 567. His presence, even on a Mediterranean island, must have been known and resented by Childebert no less than by Guntram, though both may at first have underestimated the forces behind him. The spring of A. D. 584 was not a propitious time for a Frankish adventure in Italy, and the uncle may have hastened his nephew's return. He may well have felt that although the presence of an Austrasian army may have suited Constantinople and Rome [1] it was prejudicial to royal interests in Gaul.

At the end of this very year the trouble which the kings had underestimated broke out in their own dominions. Mummolus, Guntram's former mainstay in war, waiting the hour for action at Avignon, was now joined by the Neustrian duke Desiderius, from Toulouse. This man, on the news of the murder at Vitry, arrested the progress of Chilperic's daughter Rigunth as soon as she arrived in his city. He not only prevented her journey to Spain, but placed under seals all the treasure which she was carrying as her dowry (VII. 9); this treasure he seems to have taken with him when he went off to Mummolus. Gundovald was now brought to the mainland, and formally launched by Mummolus on his career as pretender. In December of 584, he was raised on the shield at Brives in the Limousin (VII. 10). He received much popular support among the Gallo-Romans of Aquitaine,[1] and early in the following year boldly sent an embassy to Guntram demanding his rightful share of Lothar's kingdom. The envoys were arrested and examined; they admitted that Gundovald had strong support in Austrasia, and that demands were to be made on Childebert when the time came (VII. 32). Guntram was seriously alarmed. He at once warned his nephew, now fifteen years of age. They met at Chalon-sur-Saône, when Childebert was publicly adopted by his childless uncle as the heir to the Burgundian kingdom. Sigibert's cities south of the Loire, which Guntram had arbitrarily seized and hitherto refused to surrender, were at last restored under the pressure of fear (VII. 33). The main causes of dissension thus removed, the two kings sent a combined army to crush the usurper. Its appearance was enough to cause the desertion of Desiderius, and thus to deprive Mummolus of the initiative in the field. He saw himself compelled to a rapid retreat to the south-west, and was finally driven to shut himself up in the strong fortified city of Convenae, now S. Bertrand-de-Comminges, where his force was soon closely invested (VII. 34). The story of the siege of Convenae, of the base betrayal of Gundovald by Mummolus and his death at the hands of Boso, and of the ruin of a town which did not rise from its ashes for seven hundred years, all this forms one of the most dramatic episodes in the History. The great aristocratic plot was crushed; it remained to take vengeance on those who had promoted it. The treachery of Mummolus to the unfortunate man whom he had used as a pawn in a game availed him as little as the brilliant record of his earlier life in King Guntram's service. He was put to death in the camp of Leudegisel, Guntram's general (VII. 39), and the vast wealth stored by him at Avignon was divided between Guntram and his nephew. Some of the bishops who had supported the pretender were rebuked by Guntram at Orleans (VIII. 2), others were formally tried at a Council held at Mâcon (VIII. 20). Largely through Gregory's active intercession, they obtained a mitigation of sentence, or were forgiven; lay rebels were dealt with in a more drastic fashion, though Gregory by the adroit use of S. Martin's name obtained pardon for two of them (VIII. 6). The kings had won a move in their long encounter with the aristocracy, but they were far from having won the game.

---

[1] Possibly, as Dudden remarks (*Gregory the Great*, i, p. 151), the appeal of the future Pope, then *apocrisiarius* at Constantinople, may have been one of the Emperor's motives in paying Childebert a subsidy. Frankish invasion might relieve Lombard pressure on Rome.

---

[1] Gundovald was supported by various bishops. Gregory mentions Theodore of Marseilles, Bertram of Bordeaux, and Palladius of Saintes. 'Fredegar' (*Chron.* iii. 89) adds the names of Syagrius and Flavius, bishops of Autun and Chalon-sur-Saône.

Fredegund was not intimidated by their success, but pursued her ambition of withdrawing Neustria from Guntram's tutelage. She intrigued with every power likely to help her aim; with the notables of Austrasia and Burgundy, with the Bretons, and with the Visigoths. By reviving the national spirit of the Salian Franks, she won a popularity which was now to stand her in good stead. She seized an opportunity to rid herself of her old enemy Praetextatus of Rouen in a characteristically ruthless fashion. She actually caused him to be stabbed in the open church where he was taking part in the service, and no man, either cleric or layman, stood forth to help him. A Frank of good birth manfully rebuked her for the murder; she poisoned him with a stirrup-cup. She was able to defy not only the bishop of Bayeux, who was bold enough to insist on inquiring into the affair, but also three bishops sent to Rouen by Guntram for the same purpose. In many parts of Neustria there was friction at this time between her supporters and those of Guntram; but as representative of the Salians against the foreign intruder she had a mass of popular opinion on her side, and on account of her supposed patriotism her crimes were winked at, if not forgiven. She was encouraged by her late success to new attempts upon the lives of Guntram and Brunhild, but was unsuccessful on both occasions (VIII. 44; IX. 3).

The sovereigns of Austrasia and Burgundy were exposed to a greater danger than any which came from the savage Neustrian queen. Their easy triumph over the pretender, even when he had with him the formidable Mummolus, had made the aristocracy uneasy, and a new assertion of power by the queen-mother Brunhild began to cause them alarm. The mayor of the palace, appointed by them to govern the young king in their interest, died in 585. Brunhild resisted any fresh appointment, and showed herself determined to act personally as her son's guardian, with the result that the royal influence greatly increased. To counter this move, a formidable conspiracy was set on foot by the combined aristocracies of Austrasia and Neustria (IX. 9) against the young king and his mother, the aim being nothing less than the murder of Childebert and the enthronement of his infant sons under guardians chosen from among the nobles. These were Rauching, duke of Soissons, a man of such infamous character that he was notorious even in these times, and two other dukes, Ursio and Berthefred. Rauching was to strike down the king with his own hand in the palace of Metz, afterwards taking the government of Champagne under the nominal kingship of Childebert's elder son Theudebert. Ursio and Berthefred were to govern the rest of the kingdom in the name of the younger child Theuderic.[1] A plot against Guntram was simultaneously to be carried out, and it was hoped thus to deal the kingly power a blow of lasting effect (587). The Burgundian plot was ill-managed, and its discovery led to the betrayal of the other in the nick of time. Warning was sent to Childebert, who acted with promptitude and resolution. Rauching, arriving at court to play the assassin's part, was ushered into the king's chamber on the upper floor; here he was engaged by Childebert in general conversation, but prevented from approaching the royal person. He was obliged to take his leave, having accomplished nothing; but the instant he crossed the threshold he was seized by the legs and thrown to the ground, his head down the stairs, his feet still in the king's chamber. Then armed men posted for the purpose fell upon him with swords, and his naked body flung down from the window. Meanwhile Ursio and Berthefred, coming up with a force intended to hold the palace and control the situation, were met by the news of Rauching's death; they turned and fled, taking refuge in a church on a hill in the Woevre. Here they were left for a short time while the two kings met at Andelot for the more urgent business of ensuring their closer union in future by the settlement of all outstanding differences. The important Pact of Andelot (587) was the result.[1]

---

[1] Theudebert was born out of wedlock, when Childebert was himself still hardly more than a boy; at this time the king was still under twenty years of age. Theuderic was a legitimate prince, his mother being the Queen Faileuba.

The pact concluded, action was taken against all those who had plotted to infringe the royal power. The first dangerous person to be removed was the treacherous Guntram Boso, the man who had lured the unhappy Gundovald from Constantinople, then robbed him, and at the crisis of his fate felled him with his own hand. He had taken refuge in the house of the bishop of Verdun, behind whom he sought to shelter himself, refusing to let him leave his own house, though Guntram's men were about to fire it. The bishop was rescued just in time by his clergy, and the house was soon in flames. Boso coming out, sword in hand, was met by a shower of missiles; so dense was the cloud of spears that his body was pinned to the wall (IX. 10). The turn of Ursio and Berthefred followed. The church in which they had taken refuge was set in flames. Ursio came out and died like a fighting man, cutting down all in his path until he fell overpowered. Berthefred escaped to Verdun, taking refuge in the bishop's oratory, where he was killed by tiles hurled from the roof (IX. 12). Egidius of Reims alone avoided punishment for a time by virtue of his position in the Church. The triumph of the two kings and Brunhild was nearly rounded off by the capture of Fredegund herself, but 'the sorceress' eluded capture.

She used her immunity to the full, and now rewarded the indulgence of Guntram by an act of treachery. In 590 she caused the defeat of his duke Beppolen near Vannes by intrigue with the Bretons and with the duke's colleague, Ebrachar. The army met with complete disaster.[2] The king of Burgundy had been no more fortunate in the expedition which he sent against the Visigoths. Brunhild's daughter Ingund, married to Hermangild, elder son of King Leuvigild, had converted that prince to Catholicism. For this and other causes his father put him to death; Ingund who had been placed for safety with the Byzantine forces acting in concert with Hermangild, was now sent by them to Constantinople as an important hostage, should a quarrel arise with the Franks. But she died on the way at Carthage,[1] and only her little son reached the Byzantine capital. The failure of the Visigoths to prevent her departure, Leuvigild's murder of her husband, were regarded by Guntram as an affront to Merovingian royalty, and he was very obstinate in his efforts to avenge it.[2] His forces marched upon Septimania from two sides; but so gross was their indiscipline that they everywhere met with defeat; the generals, bitterly rebuked on their return by the king, admitted that the military virtues were extinct and that a Burgundian army was nothing but an armed mob (IX. 31). Though Leuvigild had been ready to make peace, the king of Burgundy would have nothing but war. Recared, Leuvigild's second son, soon after succeeding his father, established the Catholic faith in Spain (587) and sought the hand of Ingund's sister, Chlodosind. Though Brunhild and Childebert, mother and brother of the girl, consented to the match, Guntram was obdurate. In 589 he sent another army, which again suffered defeat (IX. 31). It was the last Merovingian attempt against the Visigoths. The previous year had witnessed a new campaign of Childebert in Italy, in response to the demand of the emperor that Childebert should respect his obligations, but indiscipline among the troops and jealousy between the commanders led to severe defeat. In 590 a greater effort was made by the Austrasian king.[3] Large forces led by twenty dukes devastated the Lombard plain and penetrated Venetia (X. 3). This time there was an attempt at concerted action between the Franks and the imperial commanders, but the necessary junction was not effected, through their inefficiency and the imperfect coordination of their plans, so that the whole scheme ended in the old way. Childebert's armies returned home, the king receiving once more a *solatium* from the Lombards, who agreed to pay an annual tribute of a hundred thousand pieces of gold. The emperor was indignant, but protest was unavailing. The imperial commander, who had taken Parma, Reggio, and Piacenza, was deprived of his conquests. The Lombards, like the Visigoths, were henceforward left in peace by the Merovingian kings, whose foreign expeditions, if not without pecuniary profit, had all resulted in discomfiture and dishonour;[1] Childebert, like his grandfather Theudebert, had played a false and double game. Under the house of Merovech the Frankish nation could never attain the European position to which it was entitled by its inherent strength and valour.

---

[1] IX. 11, 20, and notes.

[2] X. 9. Yet soon afterwards she persuaded Guntram to become sponsor to her young son Lothar, despite the opposition of Childebert (X. 23).

---

[1] The case of the embassy to which Grippo belonged (X. 2) shows that travellers from Gaul touched at the Byzantine province of Africa.

[2] It may be, as Oman (*The Dark Ages* (6th ed., 1923), p. 179) infers, that Guntram's attacks on the Visigoths had really a deeper motive, to find a vent for Frankish energy other than internal strife.

[3] Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Lang.* iii. 31; Letters of Romanus, the Byzantine exarch, edited by W. Gundlach, M. G. H., *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, i. For the invasions of Italy by Childebert see T. Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, v. 249 ff.

With the death of Guntram in 593 the causes of disruption which the astute king had managed to restrain came disastrously into action. It ushered in a period of internecine war and misery compared with which even the worst experiences of the past must have seemed light afflictions. At this point the History ends, for the end of the writer himself was near. It will be useful, however, to round off this abstract of Frankish history by following to their close the careers of important characters in Gregory's work. Childebert II inherited his uncle's kingdom of Burgundy, and the ambitions of Brunhild must have seemed approaching fulfilment, for against this now great state, all under her son's rule, there stood a diminished Neustria whose king was a small boy. Moreover, the large accession of Gallo-Roman subjects obtained by the new inheritance seemed to open fresh prospects of success for the crown in its struggle with the Austrasian notables. But for the moment the greatest gain must have seemed the withdrawal of Guntram's impeding hand, and the resulting freedom of action. To Fredegund also the disappearance of the controlling hand gave no less a new freedom. She seized her opportunity, and dispatched Landeric, the mayor of the palace and her reputed lover,[2] against Soissons. The child-king Theudebert was driven out, and Chilperic's old capital recovered.[3] But Childebert and Brunhild were not slow to accept the challenge; the Austrasian and Neustrian armies met at Truccia (Droisi), between Soissons and Château-Thierry (593). Fredegund was with the Neustrians, and to her suggestion is attributed the ruse by which, according to tradition, Austrasian superiority in numbers was neutralized by a surprise attack; Birnam wood was brought to Dunsinane,[1] and the army of Childebert routed by a surprise attack at daybreak. The pursuit was pressed as far as Reims, and great booty carried back to Soissons. The battle of Droisi had a sinister importance in Merovingian history. The old quarrels of the kings had chiefly taken the form of disputes for territory south of the Loire, and a high proportion of the combatants had been Gallo-Romans. Now Frank met Frank; for the Teutons it was authentic civil war. The significance of the change was felt by the Franks engaged on either side, who now as on other occasions showed themselves possessed of a national sentiment averse from fratricidal wars; the general feeling forced the angry queens to make at least a temporary peace. The close of hostilities left the advantage with Austrasia, which was now, however, engaged both on its eastern and western frontiers. The Bretons appear to have won an important success against Childebert's commanders, and to have gained control of Rennes and Nantes. On the east the Austrasian king had to put down a German rebellion beyond the Rhine. But no sooner was success achieved than death overtook him in the same year (595), poisoned, as rumour said, by his queen Faileuba. He was only twenty-six years of age.

---

[1] The Basques, with whom the Franks were always at loggerheads, more than held their own against the Merovingians, advancing their frontier from the slopes of the Pyrenees to the Garonne. From 587 the old Novempopulana was called Vasconia, from *Vascones*, the Latinized name of the Basques. From Vasconia comes the modern Gascony.

[2] He was suspected of being the real father of the young Chlothar.

[3] This is inferred from the *Gesta Francorum*, ch. xxxiv. Martin, p. 102.

After Childebert's death his kingdoms were divided between his two sons Theudebert and Theuderic, the former born to him by a concubine, the latter by Faileuba. To Theudebert went Austrasia and Germany, to his half-brother Burgundy and Alsace. Childebert's death shook the stability of the Austrasian kingdom. Fredegund, as her manner was, anticipated her enemy; before the Austrasians moved, she had seized Paris. The Avars had again appeared in the east, and Brunhild had to buy them off before she could venture to attack in the west.

---

[1] It has been suggested that this stratagem, recounted in the *Gesta Francorum*, was the source from which the moving wood in Macbeth was borrowed. It was the custom to bell the horses when tethered, and to take the bells off when they marched or attacked. The Neustrians worked their way close to the Austrasian camp by moving with the bells on their horses necks, and carrying branches. The sound of the bells in the distance served to reassure the enemy; the branches deceived him in the dim light of dawn, upon which the charge immediately followed.

She then organized a joint movement between the forces of the boy kings Theudebert and Theuderic against those of the third boy king, Lothar II. The armies met at Latifao (Lafaux, near Laon) and again fortune favoured Neustria, where the old Salian spirit was once more alive; the country as far east as the Meuse was conquered. When Fredegund died peacefully in her bed in 597 she left her son master of a recovered kingdom, and her rival humiliated by defeat.[1] Fate in the end was kind to 'the enemy of God and man'.

For Brunhild, fate reserved a different end. Her absorbing aims were to maintain the royal house against the magnates, and to keep political power in her own hands. She had her hours of triumph; on the field of Dormeille in A. D. 600 the defeats of Droisi and Latifao were avenged, and Neustria was dismembered. But she acted with so despotic a manner that the aristocracy rallied round Theudebert, whom she hated, made her position untenable, and forced her to withdraw to Burgundy and rejoin her younger grandson Theuderic. Theudebert and the aristocracy agreed with the enemy and so prevented the ruin of Fredegund's son. Rendered unscrupulous by her lust of power Brunhild pandered to the coarser passions of Theuderic, seeking to prevent his lawful marriage, that there might be no rival to her influence. She fomented war between the brothers. She incensed Theuderic against his half-brother, until the two princes confronted each other on the field of Kiersi, north of Soissons. But once more the national sense of the Franks was asserted, and once more she was baulked of vengeance. Insatiable in hatred, she even for a time effected between her own son and Lothar just such an alliance as that which had aroused her own wrath against Theudebert. Using the Gallo-Roman mayor of the palace, Protadius,[2] as her agent, she set about establishing in Burgundy the Roman fiscal system, by which all men, Teuton and Gallo-Roman alike, should be taxed. Her determination to degrade her son rather than lose her own power nearly led to disaster. Theuderic had betrothed himself to Ermentrud, the daughter of the Visigothic king, and the princess duly arrived at the Burgundian court. Brunhild promptly sent her back home, and the king of Spain formed a coalition with the Lombards, Austrasians, and Neustrians to punish the intolerable affront. She escaped the storm, and continued upon her chosen course. At last her thirst for vengeance against her stepson was slaked. In a new war between the two half-brothers, Theuderic won a decisive victory at Zülpich in 612; Theudebert was taken prisoner, and brought in chains before the victor. He was first shorn of his royal locks, then put to death; the brains of his infant son were dashed out against a stone. But, however reduced his dominions, the son of Fredegund still kept his crown. She prepared for her final vengeance. But once again Frankish history witnessed a swift and dramatic change in the fortunes of the actors. Theuderic suddenly died at Metz (613), like his father, at the age of twenty-six, leaving four young sons. It was of ill-omen for Brunhild that at this news the army gathered for the expedition dispersed. The Austrasian aristocracy perceived that the hour of their vengeance was come, and when Lothar advanced towards the Rhine many of them joined him. Brunhild fled first to Worms, then into Burgundy. Even there her power was waning to its end. She seems to have been ready to assume the part of queen-great-grandmother, and to have planned new wars. But Sigibert, Theuderic's eldest son, could make no head against Lothar; his army deserted him. The Neustrian king, penetrating Austrasia, was offered the crown, and whether or not the sons of Theuderic were killed, they soon vanished out of history. Brunhild had escaped into the Jura, but was captured at Orbe near the Lake of Neuchâtel, and brought before Lothar. The son of the woman said to have murdered a score of victims charged her with the death of ten. She was spared nothing by the vindictive king, who subjected her to all manner of indignity and caused her to be paraded round the camp on a camel. At last she was tied to an unbroken horse by her hair, by one leg and one arm, and so dragged across rough ground till she died. It was the year A. D. 613; her sister Galswinth had been murdered by the intrigue of Fredegund in 568.

---

[1] 'Fredegund' was buried in the Church of S. Vincent at Paris (now Saint Germain-des-Prés), where in 628 Lothar II was laid beside her. See note, vol. ii, p. 512.

[2] 'Fredegar' accuses her of yielding in her old age to an unworthy passion for this man.

The victory of Lothar II was an immediate triumph for himself, but for Merovingian kingship it was the beginning of the end. The Fifth Council of Paris in 615 asserted the supremacy of the aristocratic party, and of the Church which had acted as its ally. Lothar's son, Dagobert, succeeded for a while in holding his own, but he fought a losing battle. The absolutism which the sons and grandsons of Clovis had made their aim was now a thing of the past. Power fell into the hands of the Mayors of the Palace, elected by the Frankish magnates, from whose ranks they came. When the new line was founded by Pepin, its strength was derived from the free Franks who led its armies and received material rewards proportioned to their service. All was perhaps for the best. With these free Franks Charles Martel defeated the Saracens at Poitiers. With men less rough and daring he might well have failed.

VI

PARTITIONS OF GAUL BETWEEN THE KINGS

THE above historical abstract requires as its complement an account of the more important partitions which took place in Gaul between the death of Clovis and that of Gregory. It had become the Frankish custom on the death of a king to divide his dominions in equal shares among his male children; this impolitic arrangement parcelled and weakened a country intended by nature to be ruled by a single government, inevitably leading to jealousies and disastrous civil wars. It was impossible from the first to secure equality between the ambitious heirs. And when central and southern Gaul had been conquered, each prince demanded a share in all the richer lands which successively fell into Frankish power, Aquitaine, Burgundy, and Provence, with the result that the political and geographical unity of the several kingdoms was soon lost. Each ruler possessed enclaves, or remote territories only accessible across the land of a brother or nephew with whom his relations might be hostile; the confusion is made visible, if we look at any coloured map, which gives to Merovingian Gaul the appearance of patchwork.[1] The death of brothers without male issue might leave a survivor sole king, and reunite the whole country under one authority, but when the sceptre fell from his hand the land was doomed once more to partition among as many male children as he happened to leave behind him. The perpetual feuds caused by this custom neutralized the influence of the Frankish race in Europe, for a country exposed to such a source of weakness could never make its weight felt in the world. Even after the custom was abolished, in the seventh century, some of its evil effects seemed to live on in divisions made upon other principles. Charles the Great himself had to be rid of his weak brother Carloman before he could carry out his great reforms. After his own death, new partitions of his dominions undid half his work.

---

[1] See especially A. Longnon's maps in his *Atlas historique de France* (1885), pl. iii. The map in C.M.H. (II, no. 20) is also useful.

We may now describe as shortly as possible the two principal divisions of Gaul due to this custom of equal partition: that made at the death of Clovis in 511; and that which followed the death of Lothar I in 561, with the additions made in 524, 537, 567, and 584.

Divisions of 511, with the additions of Burgundy and Provence in 524 and 537.

In these partitions the whole territory left by Clovis was not treated as a unit and divided according to political expediency. It was regarded as forming two parts, in each of which all four sons had to have their share, the first part consisting of the old Frankish conquests in the north, the second part of Aquitaine, or the territory south of the Loire and west of the Cevennes conquered from the Visigoths in 507.[1] In the first partition the eldest son, Theuderic (Thierry),[2] now known as the king of Metz, became possessed of almost the whole of the Rhine valley. As we learn from Gregory's History, and the *Lives of the Fathers*, he had Cologne, Zülpich, Trèves, Metz, and Verdun, with a large part of the conquered Visigothic territory, Auvergne,[3] Limoges, Cahors, and, farther to the south-east, Rodez, the Gévaudan, Velay, and doubtless also Arles; his lands extended on the south to the border of Septimania, and on the east to the frontier of Burgundy. West of the Meuse he possessed Châlons, Reims, and Troyes. He was king of the Franks beyond the Rhine, and suzerain of the Alamanni and Bavarians. He had himself subjected Thuringia (III. 4, 7, 8). At the death of his brother Chlodomer in 524 he seems to have received a part of Sens,[4] Auxerre, and probably Nantes;[5]

---

[1] Longnon suggests that the richness of the vineyards of Aquitaine determined the kings each to demand a share of the country (*Géographie de la Gaule au VI^e siècle*, p. 90).

[2] Theuderic was the son of an unnamed concubine, and was therefore only half-brother to the sons of Clovis by Queen Clotild, daughter of the Burgundian king Chilperic.

[3] Theuderic had himself conquered Auvergne for his father in 507, as also the regions in the south-east (Longnon, as above, p. 104).

[4] The other part, including Melun and Château-Landon fell to Childebert (Longnon, p. 102).

[5] Gregory (III. 18) implies that on Chlodomer's death his two full brothers, Childebert and Lothar, alone divided this kingdom. Longnon argues, however,

about the same time there fell to him the Burgundian cities of Langres, Besançon, Avenches, Constance, and Sion.[1] Between 531 and 534 he took Bourges from Childebert. Theuderic died in 534, just before the final conquest and division of Burgundy, but his son Theudebert then added to his inheritance Autun, Chalon-sur-Saône, Vienne, and Viviers. Theudebert's share on the cession of Provence to the Franks by Witigis the Ostrogoth in 536 comprised eight cities: Avignon, Cavaillon, Apt, Aix, Riez, Senez, Digne, and Glandève. He seems further to have held Eauze, metropolis of Novempopulana,[2] with other territory in that province, and probably Agen. After his death, his feeble son Theudebald was deprived by his uncles Childebert and Lothar of various cities which had belonged to his father. Of these Eauze was certainly one; Vienne may have been taken by Lothar as early as 549, Uzès before 555.

Chlodomer, the oldest son of Clovis by Clotild, whose capital was Orleans,[3] also possessed Tours; but beyond this the extent of his kingdom is a matter of conjecture.[4] It probably included Auxerre, part of Sens and Chartres, Angers, with Nantes to the west of Tours, and Poitiers to the south.[5] Berry, between Touraine and the Upper Loire, should probably be added; but other additions suggested by Lebœuf and Baillet are not admitted by Longnon.

Childebert I, the third son, had for his capital Paris, and is sometimes styled by Gregory *Rex Parisiorum*. His other possessions, before he received a share of Chlodomer's kingdom in 524, are not clearly stated, and have to be inferred from various sources. He seems to have had Amiens, Rouen, Bayeux, Coutances, Séez, Le Mans, Rennes, and Vannes, and to have enjoyed a nominal suzerainty over Brittany.[6] After

---

that Gregory is here opposed by documents which cannot be explained away, and that the historian's omission of Theuderic is due to an oversight (p. 98).

[1] Longnon, p. 105.

[2] Soon to be known as Vasconia (Gascony). H. E. Bonnell (*Die Anfänge des Karolingischen Hauses*, p. 207) supposes that the country between the Garonne and the Pyrenees was disputed between the Franks and Visigoths at an even later period, but perhaps on insufficient evidence.

[3] 'Fredegar', ch. xxx.

[4] See Longnon, pp. 94 ff.

[5] All authorities are agreed that Poitiers and Tours always went together.

[6] The Bretons had been reinforced about this time by immigrant Celts from the south of Britain (cf. J. Loth, *Émigration bretonne en Armorique*, Rennes, 1883). They were even less under the real control of Childebert than were the Alamanni and Bavarians under that of Theuderic.

the death of Chlodomer, Childebert received that part of the *civitas* of Sens containing Melun and Château-Landon, Orleans, Chartres, and Bourges, though the latter city, as noted above, was afterwards taken by Theuderic. His share of conquered Burgundy consisted certainly of Lyons and its territory, and probably of Mâcon, Geneva, and the Tarentaise.[1] His part in the division of Provence in 537 seems to have consisted of the seven cities of Arles, Marseilles, Fréjus, Toulon, Antibes, Vence, and Nice.[2] The acts of the Episcopal Council held at Eauze in 551 show that at this date Childebert shared Novempopulana with his younger brother Lothar, though the nature and details of their partnership cannot be determined.[3] They had presumably taken Eauze from their nephew Theudebald (see above, p. 138).

Lothar I, the youngest son, who was destined after the death of his brothers to reunite under his sceptre the whole of Frankish Gaul, received a share the extent of which, like those of his brother, is left obscure by Gregory. He had the kingdom of Soissons, embracing Soissons itself, Tournai, Cambrai, Arras, Noyon, and perhaps Tongres, with Thérouanne, Boulogne, and Laon.[4] On the death of Chlodomer, Tours and Poitiers were added. The division of Burgundy yielded him in all probability Belley, Grenoble, Valence, and Die.[5] His part of Ostrogothic Provence seems to have consisted of the northern section, with the cities of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Orange, Carpentras, Vaison, Sisteron, Gap, and Embrun. To these possessions must be added the undetermined part of Novempopulana not held by his brother Childebert, and perhaps the city of Toulouse.

Division of 561, with the rearrangements after the death of Charibert in 567 and Chilperic in 584.

When Lothar I died as sole king of all the Franks like his father before him, a fresh quadruple division was made between his sons, the capitals being, as before, Paris, Orleans, Soissons, and Reims (IV. 22). The words used by Gregory of this division seem to imply that not only the capital, but also the several kingdoms remained as on the first occasion, except for the additions made after the death of Clovis (IV. 22). This, however, cannot have been the case.

---

[1] Longnon, p. 114.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 115 ff.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

The territory of the eldest son Charibert (561–7), whose capital was Paris, extended in a continuous belt down the west of Gaul, from the river Bresle, which separated Amiens and Rouen, to the Pyrenees, having to the north of it the kingdom of Chilperic; on the east, those of Guntram and Sigibert, with Visigothic Septimania; on the west, the coast of the Atlantic and the British Channel, and the peninsula of Armorica (Brittany).[1] It included Rouen, Beauvais, Senlis, and Meaux; Lisieux, Évreux, Bayeux, Coutances, Avranches, and Rennes; Séez, Chartres, Sens, and Le Mans; Angers and Nantes, Tours and Poitiers; Limoges, Saintes, Angoulême, and Périgueux; Cahors, Agen, and Albi; Bordeaux, Bazas, Eauze, Auch, Toulouse, Aire, Béarn, Cieutat, Oloron, Convenae, Saint-Lizier. Charibert thus possessed an unbroken series of provinces: Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, Limousin, Saintonge, Guienne, and Gascony.

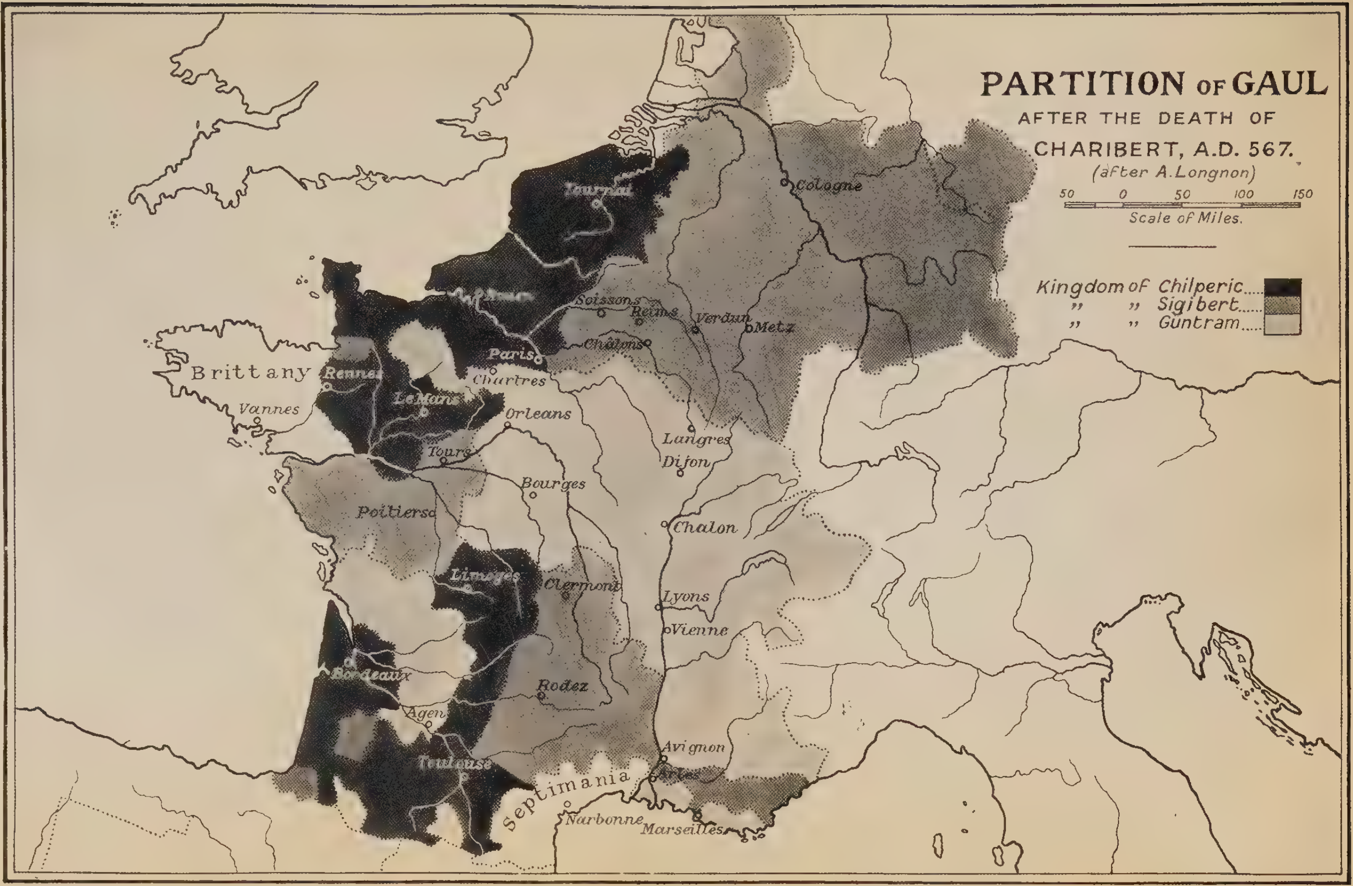
Guntram, the second son, is called by Gregory king of Orleans (IV. 22), by Gregory's continuator, 'Fredegar', king of Burgundy. Between 561 and 567, his territory included almost the whole of the old Burgundian kingdom, to which were added Troyes, Auxerre, Orleans, and Bourges on the north-west, and the greater part of Provence on the south-east.

When Charibert died in 567, Guntram received, on his north-western borders, a third of Senlis; a third of Paris;[2] a third of the Ressontois (in the diocese of Beauvais); the region of Étampes, depending on Sens; a part of Chartres, viz. le Chartrain and le Blésois; and the city of Séez. All these additions were still continuous with his old dominions. But the next formed one of those isolated enclaves which rendered this division of Charibert's kingdom so unpractical. It consisted of Nantes and its territory, separated from Guntram's older possessions by a great region under the jurisdiction of his brothers. The same remarks apply to a much larger accession in Aquitaine, including Saintes, Angoulême,

---

[1] Longnon, pp. 121 ff. The composition of Charibert's kingdom is largely deduced from the text of the Treaty of Andelot and from the signatures of the bishops attending the Council of Tours in 567.

[2] It was agreed between the three brothers that on pain of forfeiture none of them should enter the walls of the city without the consent of the other two.


PARTITION OF GAUL
AFTER THE DEATH OF
CHARIBERT, A.D. 567.
(after A. Longnon)
50 0 50 100 150
Scale of Miles.
Kingdom of Chilperic
" " Sigibert
" " Guntram
Cologne
Tournai
Rouen
Soissons
Reims
Verdun
Metz
Châlons
Paris
Chartres
Brittany
Rennes
Vannes
Le Mans
Orleans
Tours
Langres
Dijon
Bourges
Poitiers
Chalon
Limoges
Clermont
Lyons
Vienne
Bordeaux
Rodez
Agen
Avignon
Toulouse
Arles
Septimania
Narbonne
Marseilles

Périgueux, and Agen: this was a quarter in which Guntram had later to suffer from the aggressions of Chilperic.

On the death of Chilperic in 584, Guntram was the sole remaining son of Lothar I. His two nephews, Childebert II, son of Sigibert, and Lothar II, son of Chilperic, were both minors; of the first he was already the adoptive father, and he now accepted the same relation towards the second. He freely used this position to his own advantage. He retained, under protest from Childebert,[1] those parts of Charibert's kingdom which Chilperic had usurped from Austrasia on Sigibert's death (see below, p. 144); and he expressed his intention of keeping the whole of Charibert's old kingdom, which meant an encroachment upon lands now naturally falling to his other nephew (VII. 6). He thus deprived Childebert of Tours and Poitiers, of which Austrasia had already been robbed since 575 by the predatory Chilperic; and when these cities wished to return to their old Austrasian allegiance, they were roughly handled by his forces (VII. 12, 13, 24). Limoges and other cities in Aquitaine yielded without resistance to the pressure of circumstance. After recovering his own cities wrongfully seized by Chilperic, he himself wronged Chilperic's son by retaining some which had properly belonged to that king north of the Loire; he did not surrender Meaux and part of Senlis until the treaty of Andelot in 587. In like manner he kept until his death the Austrasian shares of Chartres (Châteaudun and Vendôme), and the Ressontois in the territory of Beauvais. The unsatisfactory conduct of Fredegund after Chilperic's death afforded him an excuse for annexing more and more Neustrian territory; by 590 he was possessed of Angers, Le Mans, and Rennes,[2] in these regions he already held of his own right Séez and Avranches. The treaty of Andelot in 587, which placed the relations between Guntram and Childebert on a stable footing, allowed the former to retain during his lifetime the cities of the old kingdom of Paris which had belonged to Austrasia at the time of Sigibert's death, but it provided for the return of Meaux, part of Senlis, Tours, Poitiers, Avranches, Aire, Saint-Lizier, Bayonne, and Albi. Guntram further exchanged his third share of Senlis for Childebert's third share in the

---

[1] Really from the queen-mother, Brunhild, and her advisers.

[2] Longnon, p. 136, citing X. 19.

Ressontois. Not long afterwards, on the occasion of the birth of a son to Childebert, he presented to Brunhild the city of Cahors, to which she had an individual claim.[1] On Guntram's death in 593, the whole of his kingdom was inherited by Childebert.

The kingdom of Soissons or Neustria,[2] which fell to the lot of the third son, Chilperic, was the smallest of all, probably because his brothers wished to punish the audacious usurpations by which he sought to anticipate the legal division immediately after his father's death. It is plain that he always resented this treatment, and his embittered mood may account for those attacks on Sigibert which, but for the unscrupulous action of his queen, might well have cost him his kingdom and his life (575). On Charibert's death in 567, Chilperic received as his share most of the cities between the Seine, the Eure, the Loire, and the sea coast; in addition he obtained great possessions in Aquitaine, Limoges, Cahors, Bordeaux, Béarn, Cieutat, Convenae, and Toulouse. The first five of these southern cities he had to forfeit after the murder of Galswinth (p. 112), to whom he had made them over as a wedding gift; they were seized by Guntram and Sigibert and given, in equity, to the latter's queen, Brunhild, sister of the dead princess. The murder of Sigibert by agents of Fredegund in 575 enabled Chilperic to capture and hold other cities upon which he had been making unjust attempts for years: the long-coveted Tours and Poitiers, and apparently Sigibert's share of Charibert's old kingdom. He seized the opportunity of recovering the five cities of Galswinth's dower, of which Brunhild's tenure was thus very short. In the north, he not only recovered Soissons, temporarily lost to Sigibert, but, disregarding the sworn agreement between himself and his brothers, occupied Paris and made it his residence. In the same spirit he sought to deprive Guntram of his share in Charibert's territory, seizing Saintes in 576, and, five years later, Périgueux and Agen.[1] He now had a kingdom extending from the Scheldt to the Pyrenees, including, from north to south, Tournai, Thérouanne, Arras, and Cambrai; Soissons and Meaux; Beauvais, Senlis, and Paris, the three cities which the brothers had agreed to share in equal parts; almost all Chartres, which had been similarly divided; Rouen, Lisieux, Coutances, Rennes, and Vannes; Nantes, Angers, and Le Mans; Tours and Poitiers; Angoulême, Saintes, Périgueux, and Agen; Limoges, Cahors, Bordeaux, Béarn, and Cieutat, recovered from Austrasia; Dax, Albi, and Toulouse. The relatively small kingdom which he had first obtained had now become the greatest of the three; the slight put upon him was avenged. But he did not live long to enjoy his triumph. His death in 584 soon reduced this greater Neustria nearly to its old proportions. The territory allowed by Guntram to the young Lothar II consisted of no more than the cities which in 561 had formed the second kingdom of Soissons: Rouen and Bayeux, and probably Coutances, Lisieux, and Évreux.[2] Guntram at one time appeared to regard Lothar II with a favour equal to that which he showed to Childebert; but by degrees, partly through his disillusions with regard to Fredegund, partly perhaps to doubts as to the paternity of the young prince, his affection was withdrawn. The treaty of Andelot in 587 ignored Lothar, and assured Childebert's claim to the whole succession of his uncle. The very capital of Neustria, Soissons, passed into Childebert's hands in 589 (IX. 36). Lothar and his mother took refuge in Tournai as Chilperic had done before them when his fortunes were at their lowest. But as soon as Guntram died in 593 they emerged from their retreat and took possession of Soissons. Childebert's commanders failed to eject them, and suffered a serious defeat. The later history of Neustria has already been briefly related on previous pages (pp. 131 ff.). Lothar seized Paris and other territory on the death of Childebert in 595, winning the important victory of Droisi in the year before his mother's death. Defeated at Dormeille in 600 by Childebert's two sons, he saw his kingdom shrink to the territory of the three 'cities' of Rouen, Beauvais, and Amiens.[3] In 613, after the sudden death of his cousin Theuderic, the rejection of Brunhild by the aristocracy of Austrasia and Burgundy unexpectedly made the son of Chilperic ruler of all Gaul except the small Visigothic province of Septimania.

---

[1] IX. 11. This was one of the cities formerly presented by Chilperic to her sister Galswinth as a wedding gift (IX. 20). Brunhild, therefore, might have reasonably expected to receive not only Cahors, but the others, since all five had been handed over to her after Galswinth's murder (see below), and had been unjustifiably annexed by Guntram. The rest were promised, however, on Guntram's death.

[2] *Ny-Oster-Rike*: i. e. all the territory not eastern.

---

[1] V. 13; VI. 12. Cf. Longnon, pp. 142, 143.

[2] Longnon, p. 143.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

The kingdom of Sigibert, in some way the most estimable, if not the most interesting, of the four brothers, corresponded in the main, as Gregory notes,[1] to that of his uncle Theuderic.

On his father's death in 561 Sigibert received the eastern territories now known as Austrasia ; Auvergne and the region below it to the northern border of Visigothic Septimania ; and a part of Provence. He thus had Constance and the northern part of the modern Switzerland, with Basle ; he had all the lands on the left bank of the Rhine to its mouth, a great territory extending at its widest to Laon and Châlons-sur-Marne, and including beside these cities Reims, Verdun, Toul, Metz, Trèves, Tongres, Strasbourg, Spire, Worms, Mayence, Cologne, and Maestricht.[2] In Auvergne, the Gévaudan, Rouergue, and neighbouring regions, he had Clermont, le Velay, Mende, Rodez, Viviers, Alais, and Uzès. His part in Provence consisted of Avignon, one half of Marseilles, Fréjus, Aix, and Vence. About 564 he took Soissons from Chilperic (IV. 23). The death of Charibert in 567, and the murder of Galswinth, added new territories in the south and west, though partly isolated from his previous possessions. He gained Albi, Cahors, Limoges, Poitiers, Tours, the districts of Vendôme and Chateaudun depending on the city of Chartres ; Bordeaux, Aire, Labourd, Béarn, Cieutat, and Saint-Lizier. Finally, he had Avranches in the north-west, an isolated possession on the sea, forming an enclave surrounded by Neustrian lands. These were the widest limits reached by Austrasia. Sigibert was on the point of annexing the whole kingdom of his defeated brother Chilperic when he was assassinated at Vitry. Between this time and the death of Guntram in 593, the kingdom suffered diminution. We have seen that Chilperic seized the Austrasian share of Paris, recaptured Soissons, and took possession of Avranches, Tours, and Poitiers, with the Austrasian cities in Aquitaine, while Guntram annexed the Austrasian half of Marseilles,[3] and held large tracts of his nephew Childebert's territory until his death. Only then did the young king obtain his birthright. Recovered late, it was magnificently increased by the whole kingdom of Burgundy. But Childebert only held this great dominion for two years (595). The later fortunes of the Frankish kingdoms have been indicated above.

---

[1] IV. 22. But, as above noted, the correspondence was not so exact as Gregory implies.

[2] Longnon, p. 148.

[3] He restored this in 584 (VI. 38).

One part of Roman Gaul remained beyond the grasp of the Franks throughout the period comprised within the History; this was the region of Gallia Narbonensis, which Gregory calls Septimania.[1] It represented the last remnant of Visigothic territory north of the Pyrenees; in 537 the Ostrogoth Witigis had ceded to the Franks the territory of Provence which the great Theodoric had taken under his protection at the time of the conquest of Aquitaine by Clovis. For some time Narbonne replaced the lost Toulouse as the Visigothic capital, until their kings deemed it wiser to remove further from their dangerous neighbours, and transferred their court into Spain, finally choosing Toledo as their residence and seat of government.

The Visigothic territory west of the Rhône had once included Rodez and other districts (p. 96), but these were absorbed in the Austrasian kingdom, and Septimania soon had the frontiers which it was destined to keep for two more centuries, though at the close of this long period it passed into other than Visigothic hands.

The Merovingian kings did not passively acquiesce in the retention of Visigothic territory in Gaul. Theudebert, son of Thierry, raided it in 533, but was obliged to hurry home on the news of his father's death. Guntram made several attempts to take it. In 585 he raised the old war-cry of Clovis against the detested Arians, but his two armies were signally defeated (p. 130). In 587 he renewed the attack, when his duke Desiderius was killed; he again attacked in 589, failing once more after a temporary success at Carcassonne. This was the last Merovingian attempt upon Septimania. It was left in peace until the capture of Narbonne by the Arabs in 719, followed by their occupation of the whole province six years later. The Franks were prevented from taking serious action until 737, when Charles Martel ravaged the whole region, though unable to take the strong place of Narbonne. In 752 Pepin the Short finally established Frankish authority in the province, though he too was beaten by the defences of the Arab citadel. It was not until 759 that the Mohammedans were ejected, after holding the city of Narbonne for forty years, and even then treachery on the part of Goths among the population contributed to their defeat.[1]

---

[1] The word was first used by Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep.* iii. 1, 4). Septimania is a reduced Provincia Narbonensis. It is treated by Gregory as a part of Spain (VI. 33; VIII. 28, 30), since in his time it formed an integral part of the Visigothic kingdom, the capital of which was south of the Pyrenees.

---

[1] For the attacks by Charles Martel and Pepin, see H. Martin, *Hist. de la France*, ii, pp. 211, 231, 243.

II

THE MEROVINGIAN KINGDOMS

I

GAUL IN MEROVINGIAN TIMES

a. The Country and its Communications.

WHEN the sons of Clovis had conquered Burgundy the Franks were masters of the four great river basins of France; the Rhône and Saône, the Garonne, the Loire, and the Seine; they further controlled no small part of the basin of the Rhine. The only region of Gaul under direct foreign jurisdiction was Septimania (p. 145), though the Bretons in the north-west and the Gascons on the northern slopes of the Pyrenees were Frankish subjects in name rather than in fact. The Franks held the land in the north-east from Flanders to the Rhine; they held Lorraine, Alsace, and a great part of the modern Switzerland. Their neighbours along their northern and north-eastern borders were the pagan Saxons and the trans-Rhenane German tribes, the former unsubdued, the eastern Germans held in uncertain obedience under the suzerainty of Austrasia. Beyond the Alps the dominant power was firstly the Ostragothic, then the Byzantine, and later the Lombard. Beyond the Pyrenees were the Visigoths, whose Spanish territory was continuous with their advanced post of Septimania. Both with the Lombards and with the Visigoths relations were intermittently hostile; but neither people was seriously dangerous to Frankish power. The Anglo-Saxons across the Channel seem to have been so little known that they hardly counted as neighbours at all.

By the intricate and unnatural political divisions described above the Merovingians did all that was possible to neutralize and impair the natural unity of Gaul. But that country, whether we give it its ancient or its modern name, is so favoured by nature, its physical constitution so admirably conduces to unity, that even the most unreasonable parcelling of its territory failed to bring about Frankish disruption. All writers on the geography of France have dwelt upon the material advantages through which a land possessing great variety in climate and soil and occupied by men of distinct races is held together in organic unity. We need not dwell upon so well-known a fact. It is only necessary to repeat that there are no difficult barriers between the various regions; that there is easy transition from the Atlantic climate of the Seine valley to the more continental climate of the eastern border, and the blander climate of Touraine; that from Touraine the passage is equally easy to the 'western Midi' of Aquitaine, with its spring and summer rains, to the central plateau, or to Burgundy; while from Burgundy and Aquitaine alike the marked change to hot and windy Provence is gradually accomplished. Thus a country having in some parts weather like that of England or lower Germany, in other parts a climate recalling that of the Asturias or Greece, remains always and essentially one. This united country, through passes in its eastern border, is connected with Italy, the Danube valley, and the North German plain; while its double seaboard gives it access to all countries within range of its ships.

Even in the dark age with which we are concerned France produced in abundance those harvests of vineyard, cornfield, orchard, and garden for which it has always been famous. Then, as now, there were wines of Languedoc and Provence, of Bordeaux, Touraine, and Burgundy, of Champagne and the Moselle, wines of which the Franks understood the virtues all too well, as many a passage in the History attests. Then, as now, there were fertile orchards in the Limagne of Auvergne, with its rich volcanic soil, in Lorraine, and about Tours, as we are reminded when we read of Gregory's presents of apples to his friend Fortunatus (p. 84, n. 1). The chestnuts grew on the western slopes of the central plateau; grain was raised where it is still produced on the plateaux round Paris, in Beauce, in Upper Normandy, in Picardy, in Berry, Poitou, and Aquitaine. There were sheep in Berry, and horses in the Perche. Where there was want and misery, it was due to misrule and internecine war, not to any fault of the pleasant land of France, which yielded to all those allowed by circumstance to enjoy it a sufficiency for their physical needs, and to the more favoured among the population an abundance. The good living for which Gaul was celebrated in the fourth and fifth centuries was by no means a thing of the past in the sixth.

The Romans during their long tenure of Gaul had enhanced the advantages derived from the physical constitution of the country. The great road-makers had provided a system of internal communications so soundly conceived and so well established that it outlasted all the neglect of the improvident Merovingian age, surviving to form the basis of later systems. The Roman roads [1] prevented the spread of the disintegration which else might have followed the quarrels of the Frankish kings. It is well, therefore, to consider for a moment the communications of Gaul in Merovingian times, as far as their state can be inferred from Gregory and other sources.

The traveller from Marseilles along the eastern trunk road went up the Rhône valley to Lyons, from which important city Italy could be reached by a road over the mountains to Susa and the plain of Lombardy, the route followed by Frankish armies (IV. 30 (44)), while a western road came in on the west from Limoges and Clermont. Proceeding northward up the valley of the Saône, he reached another road-junction at Chalon, an important city of the Burgundian kingdom. Here roads diverged on the east for Geneva, and for Besançon and Bâle, on the west for Autun, Bourges, and Orleans, with a bifurcation from Autun to Auxerre, Sens, and Paris. Continuing northward from Chalon through Dijon, he came to another junction at Langres. From here a road came in from the south-east, from Besançon, and from the south-west, from Autun; a third road ran north-west to Châlons-sur-Marne, but the connexion with Paris through Troyes had not yet the importance which it was later destined to attain. The northward journey from Langres was by way of Toul to Metz, the capital of Austrasia. From these cities roads converged upon Strasburg on the Rhine, while Metz was also connected with Reims by a road running westward through Verdun and Châlons. Still pressing northward, the traveller passed through the old Roman capital of Trèves, whence a road ran east to Mainz on the Rhine, along the left bank of which river he might follow a road leading him through Cologne to Maestricht and Leyden. Cologne was connected with the British Channel by a south-westerly road through the old Salian territory, with a bifurcation permitting Boulogne to be reached either through Tournai or Amiens.

---

[1] The Roman term *agger publicus*, signifying a built-up road, was still used in the sixth century (G. C. 71). The earlier Roman roads of the Antonine itinerary and the Peutinger table are conveniently shown in the map in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, i, pt. i, p. 378. The Roman system, as it was in the fifth century, is seen in Map 11 accompanying vol. ii of the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*.

The great trunk road from Marseilles to the west of France passed first through Arles and Nîmes, turning south-west at the latter place for Visigothic Narbonne; here a way ran south into Catalonia, forming the main connexion between Septimania and Spain, the Pyrenees being crossed by the easy pass of Perthus. Turning west at Narbonne and passing through Carcassonne, still in Visigothic territory, the road came out again into Frankish land before reaching Toulouse. From Toulouse, following the river, a traveller to Spain could reach Convenae (Saint-Bertrand de Comminges), whence a southerly track crossed the Pyrenees, though the better connexion with this pass was made at Auch, the next important place on his journey. From Auch an old Roman road ran due north through Agen, Périgueux, and Limoges to Bourges; thence routes diverged to Orleans and Sens, both of which places had direct communication with Paris. But the road most used in the sixth century seems to have been that which went from Auch to Bordeaux, the chief port for western maritime trade, which city had communication with Spain by a straight road passing Bayonne. From Bordeaux the main road to the north passed through Saintes and Poitiers to Tours, another important junction; from here the Breton coast was reached through Angers, where there was a bifurcation, the principal way going west through Nantes and Vannes to Brest, another, apparently less used than in the Antonine period, running north-west to Rennes and S. Malo. From Tours the through-traveller to Paris could proceed by the road along the right bank of the Loire to Orleans, whence he had a straight road to his destination. If his business lay in the north-east, another good road took him to Sens. From Paris the way was easy, either to Rouen along the Seine valley, and by the Soissons road through Amiens to the coast at Boulogne; or to Cambrai and Tournai, towns in the old home of the Salian Franks which afforded refuge to Chilperic in his war with his brother Sigibert, when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb (IV. 35 (50)).

The above short summary suffices to show that, thanks to Rome, the Franks of the sixth century were well supplied with means of communication ; though the roads were no longer well maintained, and the amount of traffic was much reduced, there was yet continual passage to and fro between the cities and towns of Gaul, only hampered by wars, or by the existence of troublesome and unnatural political frontiers.

In Gregory's time doubtless fresh tracks were already beginning to cross the country, to meet the needs of a new age. It is interesting to compare the map of Roman Gaul with one of the later Middle Ages, and to mark the addition of new cross-roads, some of great importance, or the substitution of roads diverging from the Roman between point and point. This is illustrated by the course of the medieval roads between Toulouse and Bordeaux which abandoned the Roman line. Again, an important road ran south-east to north-west across central France from Nîmes, through Clermont, to Bourges, while the Roman road connecting Orleans and Bourges with Chalon-sur-Saône does not seem to have been kept up. A road from Toulouse to Bordeaux ran south of the Garonne, through Auch, and from this place a great south and north road ran up through Agen, Périgueux, and Limoges to Bourges and on to Sens, where it was linked with the old Roman system ; Agen was connected with Nîmes by a road through Cahors. The Roman cross-road from Lyons to Limoges through Clermont was apparently not preserved as a route of importance in the Middle Ages. North and east of Paris there were changes from the Roman system. Troyes gained in importance as a road-centre. The Roman road from Reims to Trèves was disused, or less used. Soissons and Cambrai were important road-junctions, and connected with each other by a main road. From Soissons roads also ran through Amiens to Boulogne, and through Reims to Châlons, Verdun, and Metz. Cambrai was connected with Calais by a road running through Arras, whence were reached Lille and the Flemish towns ; other connecting roads ran to Valenciennes and Tournai, that from Cologne through Liège and Namur coming in at Valenciennes. The expansion of roads in this northern area, especially between Chalon and Langres, and Flanders, doubtless began because the seats of the early Frankish power were in this region which later formed the heart of Neustria ; but its ultimate development followed the increase of commerce ;

along this line were the places of the great medieval fairs: Troyes, Reims, Paris, Arras, Thourout, Bruges.

The best evidence that the inheritance of the Roman roads was not entirely ruined by the neglect of spendthrift heirs is found in such an episode as that of the ill-fated journey of the princess Rigunth from Paris to Spain (VI. 32 (45)). She was followed by a long string of wagons laden with her clothes, ornaments,[1] or other personal effects, and accompanied by a large number of attendants, with an escort of many mounted men. It is true that the journey came to an untimely end at Toulouse, but the long distance from Paris was accomplished as part of an ordinary journey, and the rest of the way would undoubtedly have been covered had not the sudden death of King Chilperic cut short the progress of the princess.[2] Elsewhere we read of carriages and carts in variety, and it is clear that wheeled traffic over long distances was a matter of course; indeed, it can hardly have been otherwise when we read of communities of traders in places like Lyons and Orleans, and of importations of produce from the Mediterranean through Marseilles. Merovingian roads cannot, therefore, have presented a spectacle of desolation; their surface was doubtless exceedingly bad, but it was passable, and they were freely used. The traveller might meet a duke or count riding with a suite of armed men, or a priest jogging to his church,[3] or a bishop on horseback or in a carriage,[4] attended by a cleric or two and by his body servants, or some great lady not too uncomfortably rolling along in a *rheda*[5] or *sarracum*[6] with her maids, and escort of mounted attendants, her heavy luggage preceding or following in carts. Or he might pass merchants' carts laden with goods, or country wagons with timber, hides, wine, or farm produce. He would certainly encounter pack-horses in file, and, in the south, perhaps a line of camels; the treasure which Gundovald had to abandon when he took refuge in the walls of Convenae was carried by a train of camels and pack-horses.[1] Finally he might see near the road the tents of some party unable to reach a village for the night,[2] or he might encounter the gentlemen of the road (X. 21).[3]

---

[1] The princess received fifty wagon-loads of clothes and jewels from her mother Fredegund alone.

[2] Queen Brunhild herself, many years before, had come as a bride from Toledo to Metz; in like manner her sister Galswinth came to Paris. For road-travel, cf. A. Marignan, *Études sur la civ. française*, i, p. 143; S. Dill, *Roman Soc. in Gaul in the Merov. Age*, p. 238.

[3] G. C. 49. The parson had two churches, between which he used to ride at a good pace (*dum velocius cornipedem calce verberans, properaret*).

[4] When Bishop Eufronius of Tours, Gregory's predecessor, went to see the king he set out in a wheeled vehicle, or rode, his luggage accompanying him in carts (G. C. 19: *imposita plaustris necessaria et caballis ad iter praeparatis*).

[5] The *rheda* was a four-wheeled carriage, sometimes drawn by four horses. Fortunatus (*Carm.* iii. 22) describes such a vehicle, in which he was invited to ride with Bertram of Bordeaux, sharing the bishop's cushioned seat:

Molliter incedens orbita sulcat humum . . .
Atque movet rapidas juncta quadriga rotas.

The gracious politeness of Bertram is thus described:

In proprium pastor molle sedile locat.

This was a carriage suitable for long journeys. Fortunatus (*Carm.* vi. 7

Unless it were under the influence of Queen Brunhild, who admired and imitated Roman ways, the old post service (*evectio publica*) was probably no longer kept up. It is true that Gregory uses the word *evectio* when describing the suppression of Rauching's plot, but he may mean no more than a right of requisitioning horses in the king's name from landowners and others living near the road.[4]

In the carrying of internal traffic[5] the roads of Gaul were supplemented by the rivers, especially the Rhône, the Loire, the Seine and its affluents, the Moselle, and the middle and lower Rhine. Both Gregory and Fortunatus mention passenger traffic by water, no less than conveyance of merchandise. Gregory tells how, near Metz, the boat provided for him was

---

and viii. 1) mentions the *sarraca*, in which the Visigothic princesses Brunhild and Galswinth came from Spain into Gaul; he applies the word *superba* to these. At an earlier date the princess Clotild came from Burgundy to wed Clovis in a *basterna* (probably here a wheeled vehicle rather than a litter) which she had to leave behind when overtaken by the men sent in pursuit by her father ('Fredegar', *Chron.* iii. 18).

[1] VII. 35: *invenerunt camellos cum ingenti pondere auri atque argenti sive equites quos fessos per vias reliquerant.*

[2] Cf. VI. 37. Tents were sometimes used when the traveller, on arrival, could not be accommodated in the house, as seems to have been the case with Bishop Mallulf at Chelles, at the time of Chilperic's murder (VI. 33 (46)).

[3] Gregory himself, in his younger years, was waylaid on the Bèbre, while on his way to Cavaillon (V. S. M. i. 36).

[4] In Theodoric's time the *cursus publicus* was still fully organized in Italy, and there were stringent rules against abuse. Even the king's *saiones* are restricted to a certain quantity of baggage, Cassiodorus typically concluding with the words, *Inertiam suam prodit quisquis secum multa portaverit*, and giving as an example for the good traveller the cranes who carry small stones just sufficient to ballast them in the wind (*Var.* iv. 47). Unauthorized use of the *evectio publica* is to be punished by the heavy fine of one hundred *solidi* per horse taken. People who take more horses than those to which they are entitled are likewise to be fined. Horses are not to be overloaded. Again the letter closes with a reference to birds (*Var.* v. 5).

[5] For inland trade see F. de Coulanges, *Hist.* iii (1922), pp. 256 ff.

invaded and all but sunk by a crowd anxious to cross the river. Bishop Theodore of Marseilles was taken in a boat for the last part of his uncomfortable journey as a prisoner (VIII. 12). River-travelling by boat, of which we often hear in the letters of Sidonius, was evidently still general. Fortunatus travels to Trèves by boat on the Moselle past the *fumantia culmina* of ‘villas’, past vineyards, the grapes showing purple amid the rocks, past Coblentz and Andernach.[1] On another occasion he encounters rough weather on the Loire;[2] or, again, the water is half frozen, so that travelling is slow.[3] He was journeying by water when he had his annoying experience with the overbearing royal cook (*Carm.* vi. 10).

The Roman roads were carried across rivers on bridges of masonry. Where no such permanent means of passage existed bridges of boats were employed.[4] A bridge sometimes stood at the frontier between two Merovingian kingdoms (VI. 19).

Communications were in places hindered by the forest regions,[5] though these did not prevent the main Roman roads from connecting the important centres of population. But the great northern forests, the Ardennes, those round Lorraine, and those of the Vosges, were real obstructions. In the wide spaces where no roads ran forests were natural barriers, such was that half shutting off Brittany from Anjou; such were the woods separating Poitou from Saintonges, and Champagne from Brie. Many great stretches of forest land were preserved by the kings for the chase as strictly as the New Forest by William Rufus (cf. p. 442, n. 1).

Marseilles is the chief port as to the trade of which Gregory speaks, and his information is of the slightest. It was probably the one busy port on the Mediterranean coast of Gaul, though Narbonne, at the head of its lagoon, must have been used by the Visigothic rulers of Septimania. A considerable volume of trade must have passed through Marseilles, coming from Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople; or from Portus, the harbour of Rome; or, again, from Byzantine Carthage, or from Spain.[1] Oil, wine, corn, dates,[2] spices, drugs, silk, papyrus[3] are among the commodities imported from Italy and from the East Mediterranean. The traders, like the trade, were also of the East; they were 'Syrians' (otherwise Levantines of various race from the East Mediterranean littoral) and Jews.[4] These merchants had their associations not only in Provence and the Narbonnaise, but in the towns of the interior, such as Orleans and Paris. At Marseilles pilgrims going to Rome or the Holy Land, or returning thence, must have embarked or disembarked; monks, priests, and deacons travelling on ecclesiastical or monastic affairs must have been frequent passengers. Occasionally an envoy and his suite, on a mission from one of the Frankish courts to Constantinople, or from the imperial court to Gaul, must have been conspicuous among the other travellers. Grippo, Bodegisel, and Evantius, Frankish envoys from Childebert to Constantinople, proceeded first to Byzantine Africa, and awaited at Carthage news of the arrangement made for their reception by the emperor (X. 2). While in this city (*Carthago magna*), the misconduct of one of their suite[5] led to the murder of Bodegisil and Evantius by the people. Grippo came safe to Constantinople and made formal complaint to the emperor, who was much troubled and promised to avenge their death. In fulfilment of this engagement he sent twelve men of Carthage to Childebert in chains, whom he might put to death if he so willed, or receive three hundred pieces of gold as ransom for each; but Childebert and Grippo were not satisfied that these men were the guilty parties, and sent them away. Casual allusions give us a glimpse of local traffic in the Mediterranean. A man carrying dust from the tomb of S. Hospitius of Nice wished to go to Lérins, and boarded a ship belonging to Jews announced as touching at the island. But they steered a course for Marseilles, whereupon, by virtue of the holy dust, the ship was held fast until they agreed to put him ashore where he wished (G. C. 95).

---

[1] *Carm.* x. 10.

[2] *Ibid.* xi. 27: *Surgebatque cadens per aquosa cacumina puppis*
Ascendens liquidas monte cavante vias.

[3] *Ibid.* 28.

[4] G. C. 30 (of a road in Auvergne): *super naves locatum erat.*

[5] See A. Maury, *Les forêts de l'ancienne Gaule*, 1867; other works are mentioned by Ch. Petit-Dutaillis in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxvi (1915), p. 97.

---

[1] Marignan, as above, pp. 141–2; Pigeonneau, *Hist. du commerce de la France*, vol. v, Paris 1855. Cf. W. Heyd, *Geschichte des Levanthandels*, new edition; O. Noel, *Hist. du commerce du monde*, Paris 1891.

[2] Cf. IV. *43* where the archdeacon's servants make away with numerous *orcae* of oil arrived in the harbour.

[3] One of Gregory's rare efforts at humour is suggested by this import. He is making a retort to his enemy, Felix, bishop of Nantes, and says: 'If thou wert bishop of Marseilles, the ships would take no cargo but papyrus to receive thy libels on good men' (V. *5*).

[4] The Jews, who had large communities in the towns (pp. 175–6), were prominent as traders. They owed much of their prosperity to the fact that the Church forbade Christians to take interest, and borrowers could not readily obtain loans without it.

[5] The man had first robbed, and afterwards killed, a merchant of the city, a fact of which the Frankish envoys were ignorant, when an angry mob appeared before their lodging. Grippo afterwards said that these people (led by the prefect of the city) numbered two or three thousand (X. 4).

The Atlantic and northern ports must have been much less important than Marseilles: even Bordeaux can have known little but coastwise traffic.[1] In the sixth century there was a lull in the dreaded Saxon piracy which had been the terror of the fifth, and in Carolingian times revived to darken the last years of Charles the Great. But trade with Britain except in slaves suffered from the disturbance caused in the island by the Saxon invasion, and we hear nothing of intercourse with Ireland, of which Gregory has no more to say than of England or Scotland. The same local character must have marked the commerce of other Atlantic and Channel ports, Nantes, Brest, and Boulogne.[2] The last named may have traded to a limited extent with southern or eastern Britain, as may the distant Leyden at the mouth of the Rhine

b. Settlements: Cities, Towns, Villages, &c.

The population of Gaul lived in large towns, towns of secondary importance, townships, and villages, and on the *villae* or country estates.[3]

In the chief town of the *civitas* resided the bishop and the count, who, between them, governed the town itself and the district.[1] The cathedral church was within the walls, and, though much smaller than the medieval cathedral, was probably the one large structure kept in good repair; the old Roman buildings were falling into ruin, and, apart from the erection of churches, little building of a permanent character was carried out. The population was thinner than under the empire; the streets and houses did not fill the area contained by the walls, where gardens and even fields were often cultivated. The corporations of artisans, so important an element in Roman days, had in the sixth century disappeared. Craftsmanship had followed patronage; and as the wealthy and important Frank disliked town life, and lived on his country estates, it was in the dependencies of the large country houses, especially of the royal *villae*, that most of the capable workmen were now to be found. The curial system was not maintained.[2]

---

[1] The ships sailing from Bordeaux to Galicia, captured by Leuvigild, were probably engaged in this traffic (VIII. 35).

[2] Charles the Great, when preparing fleets to meet Saxon attacks, restored the ancient *pharos* at Boulogne, which was one of his naval stations. He visited the port in 811.

[3] P. Imbart de la Tour, in a study of the data in the polyptych of Irminon (*Rev. hist.* lxiii, 1897, p. 12), concludes that on the agricultural land belonging to the abbey of Saint Germain-des-Prés about A.D. 800 the population must have been very much lower than that inhabiting the same area in modern times. Merovingian Gaul was mainly agricultural, the cultivated area was far less than that tilled in modern France, the cultivation inferior. If we remember that the whole population of England before the Reformation has been estimated as four millions at most, we may guess that the people of the Merovingian kingdoms were not more numerous.

Though *civitas* is generally used by Gregory in its original sense of the town and all its territory, applying the words *civitas Arverna* to Auvergne (IV. 32), he sometimes confines it to the cathedral town. Thus he also speaks of *civitas Arverna* when he only means Clermont,[3] as when he mentions a fire there (V. P. 6), and an earthquake (II. 37); he says that King Lothar buried S. Médard in the *civitas* of Soissons (IV. 19), or that Bazas (*Vasatensis civitas*) suffered from a great fire (VI. 21). Upon occasion, he uses *urbs* as an alternative to *civitas* in both its meanings. Thus he describes La Colombe as a village of the town of Orleans (*Aurelianensis urbis vicus*: III. 6); and of Chinon as a part of Tours (*urbis Turonicae*: G. C. xxii). He tells us that the walls of Soissons (*urbis Suessionicae*) fell (VI. 22), and that Ommatius began to build a church in Tours (*infra muros urbis Turonicae*: X. 31, § 12).[4]

---

[1] A. Marignan, as above, pp. 68 ff.; S. Dill, as above, pp. 263 ff.

[2] The title of *curialis* implied functions resembling those of a notary or registrar. See *Formulae Arvernenses*, in M. G. H., *Legum, Sect.* v, p. 26 (ed. Zeumer, 1886), and T. M. de Rozière, *Recueil gén. des formules* i (1859), nos. 384, 403, 408, &c. Cf. also Pfister, in Lavisse (II), p. 201. J. W. Loebell, *Greg. v. Tours und seine Zeit*, p. 106, considered that the *curia* retained more importance, and in this he has been followed by Dill, as above, pp. 81, 126, 263.

[3] Thus only the context enables us to say which meaning is intended.

[4] Leclercq notes numerous examples in which Gregory uses the alternative of *civitas* and *urbs* (in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrétienne*, article 'France', cols. 2530, 2531). *Oppidum* takes the place of *civitas* eleven times (Leclercq, col. 2531). More rarely *municipium* represents the chief place of a *civitas*; it is employed of Auxerre (IV. 41) and of Aix (G. C. 71). In G. C. 87, Ragnemod,

The system by which the districts of bishop and count were coextensive survived in Carolingian times, when the capitularies show that in the city and its territory the count still stood for the secular authority over against the bishop, who stood for the ecclesiastical.[1] Gregory in his various writings names eighteen 'cities' as residences of counts,[2] but the actual number must have been greater. For the territory attached to the episcopal town the word *territorium* is commonly used; the word *pagus* has a similar meaning; speaking generally, both represent the area of which the town was the ecclesiastical and administrative centre.[3] Gregory gives a like sense to the word *terminus*, which in later times was used for a smaller unit than the diocese;[4] occasionally the general term *regio* serves the same purpose. Not every episcopal town of the sixth century had from the first been the capital of a *civitas*. Some rose to the position from the rank of *castrum*, or secondary town. Such were Chalon-sur-Saône, Mâcon, Nevers, Agde, and Carcassonne to which Gregory applies the term *urbs*, used by him as the equivalent of *civitas* (cf. above, p. 159). Some twenty-five *castra* are mentioned by Gregory of which Dijon[5] is the most notable (III. 19).

It is not easy to form a clear idea of the population in a

---

successor of Germanus in the see of Paris, is called *eius municipii sacerdos*; in the very next chapter Paris is described in a single paragraph both as *urbs* and *civitas*.

[1] This is the opinion of Longnon. Cf. also M. Deloche, 'Études sur la géographie historique de la Gaule,' in *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions*, iv, pt. ii, p. 120. The coincidence of *civitas* and diocese had been decreed at the Council of Chalcedon held in 451 (Canon 17). As the *civitas* was derived from the territory occupied by a Gaulish tribe, the titles of the older dioceses still transmit names familiar to the readers of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*.

[2] These are: Angers, Angoulême, Autun, Auvergne, Auxerre, Bordeaux, Bourges, Chalon-sur-Saône, Châteaudun, Javols, Limoges, Lyons, Meaux, Orleans, Poitiers, Rouen, Saintes, and Tours (Leclercq, in Cabrol, as above, col. 2535).

[3] *Pagus* is sometimes used by Gregory in a vaguer sense, comparable to that of *pays* (cf. Longnon, *Géogr. de la Gaule au VI^e siècle*, p. 28, and A. Jacobs, *Géogr. de Grég. de Tours*, 2nd ed., p. 46). At other times he applies it to a place ranking as *castrum*, or to a part of a *civitas*, or even to a forest tract (IX. 12), or to the open country (V. 14).

[4] As noted elsewhere, he often inverts the meaning of *dioecesis* and *parochia*, the former sometimes signifying parish, the latter, diocese. On other occasions both words are used as we use them to-day.

[5] He says that he does not know why Dijon was not a *civitas*. His description of its great walls and towers, watermills, and vineyards is due to the connexion of his family with the place and the interest which he personally felt in its prosperity.

Merovingian city, or to guess the status and numerical proportion of its elements. The clerical and monastic element must have been large; the count and his subordinate officials conspicuous; each group had its numerous dependents chiefly drawn from the class of serfs. But every large town must have had some warehouses and shops; and in those places where there was a considerable commerce the merchants must have formed considerable groups. The wealthier among these men with their families and servants may well have represented the nucleus of what in later times became a citizen society. They must have owned houses in the town; perhaps they had country property outside it. Gregory speaks of merchants trading in wine and other commodities as if they were men of some substance; and they must have been included among those whose names were entered on the tax-lists.[1] We may perhaps infer the beginnings of that trading population through the efforts of which in aftertimes the free city came into existence. In the sixth century it was small and easily oppressed, though the opposition to new taxation suggests that it was not without a corporate sense. It was composed of Gallo-Romans with the addition of foreigners, chiefly Jews and Syrians; the Franks had small taste for commerce.

The word *vicus* signified a township, or large village.[2] The *vici*, which had mostly been in existence from imperial times,[3] were inhabited by communities of freemen: merchants, artisans, and small proprietors, holding the surrounding land. They were numerous; thirty in the *civitas* of Tours are known to us. The people of the *vicus* built and maintained their parish church.

Villae were much more numerous than *vici*. The modern village is derived from the *villa*, which was not always in the possession of a single owner,[4] but kept its unity even when it belonged to several proprietors. Under the single owner, the huts of the agricultural workers tended to form a group along a road, and this physical unity was perpetuated, so that this part of the *villa* must have looked very like a modern village, especially as it had its own oratory or small church. The single domain was divided into two distinct parts, the owner's residence with its dependencies, gardens, vineyards, and home fields (*mansus indominicatus*),[1] and the farm and forest land, parcelled out among the *coloni*, the *lidi*, who resembled freedmen, and the slaves (*mansus ingenuilis*, *lidilis*, *servilis*). Each of their holdings had on it a hut or cottage (*casa*) ; but one tenant might cultivate more than one holding. All the tenants made a fixed payment to the landowner, and most of them gave him days of labour on the land surrounding his residence.[2] Rural economy was based upon the domain, and though the word *fiscus* was generally used of the royal domain yet every large estate was really a *fiscus*.[3] Out of this domanial system the feudal system was to grow, largely through the development of benefices, or lands granted for a fixed term.

---

[1] In his Life of S. Aredius, Gregory says that the *tributum* or *census* was exacted from *universis urbibus per Gallias constitutis*. For the *tributum* cf. Fustel de Coulanges, as above, pp. 264–5; cf. also p. 220 below.

[2] In a few places Gregory's use of the word is ambiguous. He seems more than once to apply it to a town. Sometimes he even uses *domus* for *vicus* (Leclercq, as above, col. 2533).

[3] When the Franks created new townships it was chiefly in the north-east, and on main roads (Pfister, p. 204).

[4] Sales, gifts, and partitions among heirs accounted for the division. Gregory mentions such partners in *villae*. For the *villa* see also A. Marignan, as above, pp. 97 ff.

Gregory sometimes uses the word *villa* for a hamlet, sometimes for a single farm on a private estate or domain.[4] But in this he is exceptional, for Merovingian charters use the term in the wider sense indicated above. He sometimes even writes *domus* as an alternative to *villa*.[5] It will be gathered from the above that Gregory is not a precisian in his use of terms, and that his meaning is sometimes rendered uncertain by his laxity.

[1] These dependencies included, in addition to stables and gardeners' quarters, accommodation for a number of other people essential to a small and largely self-supporting community: bakers, vintagers, dairymen, butchers, and various craftsmen, such as carpenters, cartwrights, harness makers, weavers, and spinners, these last being women.

[2] For *coloni*, *lidi*, and slaves, see also p. 390. The general system of land-exploitation continued in Carolingian times, and much of our information with regard to it is obtained from the full details with regard to the estates of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, near Paris, left to us by the Abbot Irmino, and from the capitulary *De Villis* of Charles the Great. Cf. B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon, ou dénombrement des manses, des serfs et des revenus de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés sous le règne de Charlemagne* (Paris, 1844).

[3] *Fiscus* meant a territorial whole belonging to one owner, governed by a single administration, and generally subject to a single system of dues, services, and conditions.

[4] Royal *villas* with their dependencies must have included a very large number of buildings (cf. p. 402).

[5] Seven places are called *domus*: Iciacus, Jocundiacus, Marciacus, Marilegia, Sexciacus, Vibriacus, Vindiacus.

Under the Merovingian kings the land was more and more held by owners of large estates. By the joining of field to field great properties came into being, especially those of the Church. The large domains were generally freehold, whether purchased, inherited, or received by donation. But there was another mode of tenure in which the land was held in dependence upon a great landlord. This was tenure by *benefice* ; a man desiring security in an age too violent for the safety of the small owner (pp. 198, 388) made a request to the great landlord, and was admitted by his grace as tenant for life or for a fixed term.[1] In both cases the tenant might be living on land which had been his own freehold, as when a man gave his land to a lord whose protection he desired, or to the Church, on condition that he might hold it for his life. All parties except the heirs of the tenant were satisfied by the system of holding land as benefice. The beneficiary gained relief to his conscience, or protection by a powerful person ; the Church or the lay proprietor received the land at the tenant's death with all improvements free of expense, while during his life a small payment had annually flowed into their coffers. The tenure of land as 'benefice' might be sought by a man who was also seeking recommendation (p. 388). It is easy to see here tendencies leading towards feudalism. Recommendation and tenure by benefice were certainly two such factors, and when the third factor of *immunity* was added the conditions of the feudal system were essentially present. Immunity was a diploma granting freedom from interference by royal officials upon a large estate. The landowners, who already had a jurisdiction over all persons living on their domains, resented the right possessed by the count or his delegates of coming upon their land, interfering between their *coloni* and themselves, and calling out their men to serve in the royal army. They succeeded in course of time in obtaining diplomas of immunity, securing them against all interference of this kind, and even allowing them to raise and transmit to the king their own taxes, a method which sometimes ended in cessation of payments. The result was that domains resembling petty kingdoms were scattered over the country; property merged into sovereignty, and the rise of feudalism at the close of the Carolingian era was a natural development. Church estates were often granted immunity, a fact which still further increased the prestige of the bishop or abbot as compared with that of the count.[1] The donations of land from the royal domain made by the king to those whom he wished to reward were not 'benefices' until the end of the Merovingian period.[2] The kings did indeed take them back upon occasion, as when the holder was guilty of disloyalty; or his sons might resume possession. But in theory they were free gifts, and it was often in the royal interest to re-bestow land which had been taken back.[3]

---

[1] Whence the description of such land as *precaria* (Pfister in Lavisse, II. i, p. 209). The system had existed in Roman times. The Church was often in the position of owning more land than she could conveniently till with her own serfs and *coloni*. For benefices held of the Church cf. Marignan, as above, pp. 190, 298.

---

[1] Pfister, as above, pp. 212 ff.

[2] The early kings may have given some small estates as benefices.

[3] At Andelot, Guntram and Childebert II promised the restitution of lands originally held as royal gifts before the death of Lothar I in 561. Under the Pepins and Charles Martel, the kings, having many warriors to reward and not nearly enough domain-land at their disposal, were forced to expropriate some of their subjects who were innocent of all disloyalty, and even to bestow lands belonging to the Church; in the latter case it was admitted that the Church lands were really inalienable, and the new holders were bound to pay a fixed annual sum in recognition of her right. Charles the Great in 779 made them pay both tithes and nones, and on their death the land reverted to the Church. These royal gifts at the expense of the Church were essentially 'benefices' (Pfister, as above, p. 211).

II

THE PEOPLES OF GAUL, AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

Gallo-Romans.

THE influence of the Gallo-Roman population in the different Merovingian kingdoms varied in proportion to their numbers. The absolute numbers cannot be even guessed, nor can we state with any accuracy their relative strength compared with the Franks. The Gallo-Roman element was most important in Aquitaine, Auvergne, and Provence; it was well represented in Neustria, but of much less account in Austrasia and Burgundy. In Aquitaine the Gallo-Romans may well have been in a decisive majority, and the number of important persons was probably higher than elsewhere. In Neustria the mass of the lower population must still have been Gallo-Roman, though there was a large immigration of Salian Franks who dominated a Roman land of which they adopted the speech.[1] Austrasia was essentially Teutonic; the mass of the population was German.[2] The relative weakness of Gallo-Romans in Burgundy is suggested by the fact that there is no evidence of hostile feeling between the Franks and the Burgundians. The conquest led to no after-trouble; the country settled down under Burgundian law; we do not hear of intrigues and rebellions such as those which kept breaking out in Aquitaine. When, at a later time, Burgundy detached itself from Austrasia, it did so under its own Teutonic aristocracy; it never showed a desire to join the Gallo-Roman kingdom of Aquitaine. The inference is that the Gallo-Roman element was here neither influential nor very numerous.

---

[1] In 842 the common language of Neustria was still Roman. Before a battle in that year the two allied kings, Charles and Louis, harangued their respective troops in their own languages; then each took an oath before the army of the other. We are told that Charles addressed his Neustrians in 'Roman', Louis his Teutons in 'German' (H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii. 4). The Franks of Neustria must have adopted the Latin tongue of the region, which seems to prove a numerical predominance of the Gallo-Roman element.

[2] The German element was naturally strongest near the eastern frontiers, its influence diminishing as they were left behind. G. Kurth, *Études franques*, Brussels, 1919 (*Études* III, VI, VII–IX, X, XIII), may somewhat exaggerate the undoubted preponderance of the Gallo-Romans beyond the limits of Austrasia. We have not evidence enough to discern with exactitude the respective shares of the indigenous and foreign elements in the population of Gaul. Cf. L. Levillain's review of Kurth's work in *Bibl. de l'École de Chartes*, lxxx, p. 249.

As regards Aquitaine and Auvergne the supposition of great Gallo-Roman strength is confirmed by the events of history. As early as the time of Theuderic, son of Clovis, the Arvernians led by the 'senatorial' Arcadius attempted to call in Childebert of Paris, whom they preferred to the ruler of the more Teutonic Ripuarian kingdom (p. 102). The adventure cost them dear; their country was overrun, the venerated church of S. Julian sacked, and large numbers of the population were carried into slavery.[1] The experience may have helped to determine their prudent action with regard to Chramn when the people of Clermont shut the gates of their city upon him,[2] and he moved west to make Poitiers his capital; Gregory relates the tragic end of this second attempt to found a kingdom representative of the Gallo-Roman majority. Yet Aquitaine remained the stronghold of the Gallo-Romans, as we may infer from the fact that in later years it found even a Romance-speaking Neustria too Frankish, and that as soon as its leaders saw a chance of independence they renewed attempts to break away. They began in the seventh century in the reign of Dagobert; Duke Eude laid the foundations of a Gallo-Roman state in the time of Pepin of Heristal, braved in 719 the formidable Charles Martel, and though beaten, yet survived. After many hard blows from the Austrasian hammer he patriotically joined in the great victory over the Arabs at Poitiers, and confirmed his position, though at the cost of recognizing Austrasian sovereignty. He died as recognized king of Aquitaine (735); but his son Hunald threw off allegiance to Austrasia, and resigned rather than submit to Pepin and Carloman in 745. A long struggle between Hunald's relative and successor Waifer ended at last in the conquest of the country by Pepin in 768; and the anti-Teutonic feeling was overcome by the great Charles in 781, when he named his young son Louis King of Aquitaine. As Freeman says, Aquitaine had practically to be conquered over and over again; there was really nothing in common between the lands north and south of the Loire but their political union, first under the Roman, then under the Frankish dominion.[1]

---

[1] III. 11, 12.

[2] Chramn, who had previously resided in Clermont, had roused the hostility of the chief Gallo-Roman families by the debauchery of his life; this was the ostensible reason for his exclusion.

Gallo-Romanism thus won a moral victory after the vicissitudes of three hundred years. But this victory was only rendered possible through the collaboration of a greater fighting race, the Basques or Gascons (p. 173). The Gallo-Roman spirit triumphed by the help of Basque support; in later times Aquitaine became Gallo-Basque, as Neustria became Gallo-Frank. These two regions formed the whole western half of Gaul. The eastern half was equally formed by two areas, Austrasia and Burgundy, which have been described as Franco-German and Franco-Burgundian. These names are significant. The Gallo-Roman factor had been thrust westwards; in Eastern Gaul it was secondary, except perhaps in Provence. Thus, the Frankish dominions fell naturally into two divisions corresponding to the civilization predominating in each. The western half was a Romance land, the eastern (Austrasia) was Teutonic; no amount of subtle political delimitation of parcelling the country among Merovingian kings could alter this fundamental fact. But if the provincial Roman strain predominated over a part only of the land, the Roman tongue achieved a wider triumph; from it the French language arose.

While the empire ruled Gaul the long and quiet action of Roman influence had firmly implanted Latin by the side of the old Celtic speech, which progressively declined except in remoter country districts and in Brittany. After the coming of the Teutonic tribes Latin held its ground, and with the passage of time more and more clearly revealed its destiny as the foundation of the future French language. The penetration of the Goths, Burgundians, and Franks was not accompanied by massacres, and from the first the Gallo-Roman population had the advantage of numbers.[2] These three nations were all Christianized at an early stage; they had been *foederati* of the Empire, from which they had learned much before they overthrew its dominion. We may contrast the process of events in the British Isles. Here the Roman influence had been shorter and less profound; the barbarian conquest was effected by northern tribes which did not spare the people as they advanced, and remained pagan for nearly two centuries. During that time the victors imposed their language on a land of which they had crushed or expelled the old inhabitants. Had the empire lasted another hundred years, bringing the Saxons as much within its sphere of influence as the other Teutonic tribes; had it been able to diffuse its culture more widely, and plant the roots deeper, England also might to-day have been counted among the Latin-speaking nations. Some bishop of Canterbury or London might have anticipated Bede, and left us a History of the earlier Anglo-Saxon England resembling that in which Gregory of Tours has portrayed the Gaul ruled by the Merovingian Franks, a History written by one born in the century of the principal advance, and passing his manhood among the second generation of the conquerors. Though doubtless much modified by foreign influence, the Celtic tongue had still been the speech of rural Gaul in the fifth century, Latin being the language of the towns and that of the Christian religion. The influence of the Church had been most active in grafting Latin on the Celtic stock, and finally creating the 'Roman vulgar tongue', a widely disseminated patois, in which Latin words predominated, and so like that developed under similar conditions elsewhere as to be intelligible in Spain and upper Italy. Though in the time of Gregory much of the Celtic idiom must still have survived in country districts, especially in the West, while the Franks spoke among themselves their Teutonic dialect,[1] both languages were destined to succumb. The Roman vulgar tongue, not Frankish, was the foundation of French. In 842, when the two kings Charles of Neustria and Louis were allied against Lothar, the Neustrian army of Charles was harangued in the Latin vulgar tongue, and Louis swore fidelity to his brother in this language that the Neustrians might understand what he said; this shows, as already noted (p. 165, n.), that the Franks of Neustria were now merged in the local population whose language they had adopted. The issue of the struggle between the Germanic and the Latin tongues was no longer in doubt. Decade by decade the Romance language gained upon its rival, and in the end won a complete victory.

---

[1] *Hist. Geography of Europe*, i, p. 120.

[2] Homogeneous groups on different borders, like the Bretons in the north-west and the Basques in the south-west, might remain faithful to their own tongues. But as they lived in compact bodies in detached positions, their attitude did not affect the progress of the linguistic struggle between the two protagonists.

---

[1] A council held at Tours in 813 required every bishop to have sermons translated into the Roman vulgar tongue as well as into Frankish (cf. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii. 362).

When the Franks entered Gaul they penetrated a society more highly organized than their own, with a language more perfectly adapted both for diplomacy, law, and administration. Being illiterate, they were forced to depend upon Gallo-Romans for all activities requiring the use of the pen ; the survival of Latin was thus a necessity ; it was from the beginning the official language of the conquerors, the Salic and other barbarian Laws were first written down in Latin. But naturally there was a large influx of Teutonic words ;[1] and a Celtic element remained. In his important work on the language of Gregory, Bonnet has described the various changes which gradually transformed the Roman language as it was in the time of an Ausonius, a Prudentius, or even of a Sidonius, into the Latin of the early Middle Ages.[2] But it was Latin still. The Roman tongue became Romance, but it dominated that spoken by the tribes which had once conquered Rome.

Teutonic and other Tribes.

The Burgundians. This people doomed to dispossession by the Franks, but leaving their name in perpetuity to a great province in the east of France, had in the first and second centuries occupied the region of the Warthe and Netze, between the Oder and Vistula, and in the third had moved through Germany to the Main. In the early fifth century they settled on the Rhine, but were crushed at Worms by the Huns in 435–6,[3] the remnant withdrawing to Savoy, where the empire gave them territory, including Geneva. They were near the Rhône in the time of the early Frankish king Clodio, before the year 448 (II. 9); Gregory's statement to this effect agrees with that of Prosper Tiro.[1] In 457 their lands reached the right bank of the river, and the extension of their power was rapid. Gregory begins his account of their history in Gaul by telling us that towards 500 Gundobad and Godegisel reigned on the Rhône and Saône.[2] In 499 Clovis attacked Gundobad and drove him into Avignon, but his campaign failed, and the evil day of Burgundy was postponed. We later learn from him that they had three chief cities: Geneva, their old capital in Savoy;[3] Vienne, where they were seated in the early sixth century (II. 32); and finally Lyons, the capital of Sigismund, son and successor of Gundobad (III. 5).[4] From the year 488 the Burgundian kingdom, from north to south, ran from Langres to Avignon, Autun being one of its important cities; the list of bishops present at the Council of Epaone, convened by King Sigismund in 517, shows that the Burgundian northern frontier stopped short of Auxerre, Troyes, Châlons, and Toul. In 506–7 the Burgundians joined Clovis in the campaign which ended Visigothic dominion in Aquitaine. The renewed Frankish attacks upon Burgundy began in 523, and as they proceeded the Ostrogoths took the opportunity of subtracting various Burgundian towns, and adding them to Provence.[5] But though the Burgundian king Godomar, by recognizing Ostrogothic suzerainty, obtained a momentary reprieve, the year 534 saw the partition of Burgundy between Childebert, Lothar, and their nephew Theudebert of Austrasia (pp. 138–9).

---

[1] About a thousand German words entered the language, representing terms relating to war, politics, domestic, and agricultural matters. But there are no early German documents which help us adequately to follow the interaction of the two tongues (Bayet, in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de France*, II. i, p. 250).

[2] Max Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours*. The reader who wishes to follow the fortunes of the Latin language under the hands of Gregory and his contemporaries is recommended to study this book. The reader may also consult H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *La déclinaison latine en Gaule à l'époque mérovingienne*, 1872, and *Études sur la langue des Francs à l'époque mérovingienne*, 1900 ; Gaston Paris, *La littérature française au Moyen Âge*, pp. 22 ff. ; Brunot, in Petit de Julleville, *Hist. de la langue française*, i (1905).

[3] Schmidt, in C. M. H., i, p. 361. This defeat of the Burgundians gave rise to the saga of Attila's destruction of the Burgundian kingdom.

In 626 Burgundy had fallen into a kind of 'aristocratic anarchy'; 'Fredegar' says that the nobles now acted according to their good pleasure. In the early part of the eighth century, most of the country detached itself from the rest of France and lived for a time in independence, but after his great victory over the Arabs at Poitiers in 732 Charles Martel subjected it to his authority. At a later time it again separated from the Carolingian dominion before the division of 887, and formed no part of the reunited empire of Charles the Fat. But its isolation was short, and it was brought under the kings who held Germany.[1] In spite of the national feeling to which these events bear witness there was never a deep hatred between the people and the Franks, who allowed them to live under their own laws and to retain their property.

---

[1] Longnon, *Géogr.*, p. 65.

[2] They are also said to hold Marseilles; but this city must have been quickly recovered by the Visigoths. At any rate the Rhone had become practically a Burgundian river.

[3] V. P. i. 5.

[4] These two cities were probably occupied about 470 (Longnon, p. 71). 'Fredegar' says that the Burgundians had Chalon in 493.

[5] S. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Vaison, Orange, Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon, Apt, Sisteron, Gap, and Embrun. Cf. Pfister in C. M. H. ii, pp. 117, 161. The Frankish attacks were repeated in 524 and 532–4.

The Alamanni in the fourth century occupied the country on the right bank of the Rhine from Lake Constance to Mayence.[2] At the end of the fifth century they had spread south into Switzerland. In 495 or 496 Clovis, after a long war, forced the Alamannic[3] confederacy to submission, probably in the region of Alsace (II. 30). In 517 the Burgundians were predominant east of the Jura, in the territory of Avenches and Windisch (Vindonissa) towards Lake Constance; but after first defeating that people at Zülpich the Alamanni were driven back before them. Thereafter they remained in dependence upon Austrasia and did not play any prominent part until later times, when they were associated with Bavarian revolts against Charles Martel at the time of the Arab invasion of France (725). On the death of Charles they claimed their freedom, but were treacherously surrounded and cut up by Carloman in 746.

The Thuringians, Saxons, Alans, and others. The Thuringians of Dispargum (II. 19) would seem to have been really a settlement of Thuringians from Germany (p. 90, n. 7); some have supposed that Childeric fled here when exiled by his own tribe, the words attributed to Queen Basina suggesting that the country was not remote from the sea. They must have been the people subdued by Clovis in 490 (II. 27), since at that time he could hardly have attacked the inhabitants of the German Thuringia.[1] Their territory was probably on the left bank of the Rhine between Cologne and the sea.

---

[1] E. A. Freeman, *Hist. Geogr. of Europe*, i, p. 145. In after years the greater part of the old Burgundy was swallowed up by the kingdom of France, the only part which escaped inclusion being that which now forms the western cantons of Switzerland.

[2] H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, i, p. 166. Under the leadership of Croc, the Alamanni had raided Auvergne, the Gévaudan and Arles (I. 30).

[3] After the victory of Clovis a remnant of the Alamanni moved south into Rhaetia, and Theodoric the Ostrogoth, becoming their protector, found them a home in Pannonia (Cassiodorus, *Var.* ii. 41; iii. 50). Cf. Bury, *Hist. of the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., i, p. 461). The Alamannic war was probably the hardest struggle undertaken by Clovis. It was at the crisis of its last campaign that, according to a famous legend, he remembered the declaration of his Christian queen, Clotild, that her god was the god of battles. He vowed that if he triumphed he would be baptized, and after his victory kept his word.

The *Saxons* of the Bessin, or country round Bayeux (*Saxones Baiocassini*), represented one of the early settlements made by the sea-roving Saxons in the fifth century. They long remained subjects of Neustria, and are twice mentioned in connexion with affairs in Brittany.[2] Another group of Saxons of similar origin occupied the islands near the mouth of the Loire; they have been mentioned on another page in connexion with Roman campaigns (p. 91).[3] Gregory does not allude to them again; but we read of them in Fortunatus, who praises Felix, bishop of Nantes (550–83), for converting them to Christianity;[4] this shows that at the end of the sixth century they were still recognized as a national unit. After this time they are heard of no more.

Alans. When the bulk of this Sarmatian tribe from the Caucasus crossed the Pyrenees with the Suevi and Vandals a certain number remained in Gaul, and were granted Armorican territory, which was no longer subject to imperial authority.[5] At the time of the great battle against Attila they were living on the Loire, their king residing at Orleans. They were forced by Theuderic the Visigoth to take part in the battle, and in the following year were subjected to his rule.[6] After this their name disappears from the history of Gaul. The *Theifali* were in like manner a residue of barbaric auxiliaries to whom lands were granted by the empire;[7] they resided south of the Loire, in the territory of Poitiers, and are mentioned as attacking the ex-duke Austrapius, who had oppressed them about 561.

---

[1] Longnon, as above, p. 165.

[2] Chilperic sent them to fight against Waroch, the Breton chief, by whom they were defeated (V. 27). Fredegund made them the instruments of her spite against Guntram, causing them to cut their hair in the Breton fashion, and secretly reinforce that people against Guntram's army (X. 9).

[3] II. 13 (18), 14 (19).

[4] *Carm.* v. 9. The slaves mentioned in VII. 45 (46) are conjectured by Longnon to have belonged to this Saxon group on the Loire. The passage through Eastern Gaul of Saxons who had migrated from North Germany to Italy and joined the Lombards (IV. 43) did not affect the population of the country.

[5] Life of S. Germain of Auxerre, II. 1, cited by Longnon, p. 168.

[6] II. 7; Jornandes, *De reb. Get.* 43.

[7] They were probably of Asiatic descent, like the Alans. The *Notitia*

Older inhabitants of Gaul: the Basques (Vascones).

The Vascones were people of Iberian race living on both sides of the Pyrenees, where they had remained unconquered by the Visigoths;[1] their name is first heard of as that of a tribe with which that people came into conflict in Upper Navarre. They first appear in the History when Gregory (VI. 7 (12)) mentions an attack made upon them in 587 by Bladast, Chilperic's duke south of the Garonne, whom they defeated; they had come on a raid from the mountains, to which they again withdrew. In 587, possibly at the instigation of the southern Gallo-Romans, always hostile to Frankish government, they again descended, this time driving the Franks from the cities of the old Novempopulana. The Duke Austrovald led an expedition against them without decisive result; from this time may date their definite occupation of a part of Novempopulana, henceforward known as Vasconia (VI. 7 (12); IX. 7).[2] At a later period than that with which the History is concerned, this people, as already noted, played a most important part in Frankish history. For more than two hundred years they never owed more than a nominal allegiance to any Frankish ruler except their own choice, though in 602 Childebert's sons seemed to have subdued them, and in 635 Dagobert obtained a like appearance of success. We have seen that in the early eighth century, when Duke Eude made himself king of Aquitaine, the Gascons became the backbone of his military power; they and the Gallo-Romans were always drawn together by a common dislike of the Franks. Later in the century they joined in opposition to the Austrasian Pepin. Apparently subdued in 762, they again rose against Charles the Great. It was they who fell upon the great emperor's rearguard at Roncesvalles or

---

Dignitatum mentions a *Praefectus sarmatorum et Teifalorum* living in the territory of Poitiers (ed. O. Seeck, p. 219). The settlement of these Asiatics, Alans and Theifali, in the West may have had some influence on Teutonic arts (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, pp 187–8).

[1] Leuvigild won a certain measure of success against them from the Spanish side, but they were always rebelling after his time.

[2] H. Martin, *Hist. de la France*, ii, p. 57; Fauriel, *Hist. de la Gaule méridionale*, ii, p. 18, &c.

Roncevaux (778), where the death of Roland, warden of the Breton marches, at their hands gave rise to the great French epic. They rebelled more than once against his son Louis, first when he was king of Aquitaine (811), later when he was emperor (819). This hardy people of the southern mountains was no less obstinate in defending its independence than the irrepressible Saxons of the northern plains. But while Charles the Great at last succeeded in breaking the Saxons, the Gascons remained long after his death a thorn in the side of his descendants. They were constantly helped by the fact that their race occupied both slopes of the Pyrenees, and their people in France and Spain could bring support, or give refuge to each other.

Bretons. The peninsula of Brittany was inhabited by a Celtic population which retained a practical independence during the whole of the period with which we are concerned. The Frankish kings had at times a nominal suzerainty, and, when strong, held the cities of the marches (Nantes, Rennes, Vannes) ; they sometimes received payments of tribute. But they could never permanently assert their power over the whole Breton people. The sixth century witnessed the arrival in Brittany of numerous saintly persons from the opposite shores of the Channel.[1] The Anglo-Saxon invasion of our island had already filled with British immigrants whole tracts of Armorica which had been depopulated by earlier Teutonic invasions. The arrival of spiritual leaders quickened the national feeling ; the inhabitants of the peninsula, united by King Riowal or Howel, formed a power which it was impossible to subdue and most difficult to keep in check. From their safe retreats they were able to raid the marches, and vanish into the interior of the peninsula where the Franks knew better than to follow them.

At the division of the kingdom of Clovis, Childebert I, king of Paris, received the cities of Nantes and Rennes, but his suzerainty over the peninsula was nominal. This was still the state of affairs when, about the year 558, Canao, or Conober, son of Howel, offered asylum and alliance to Chramn, the rebel son of Lothar I, now king of all Frankish Gaul (IV. 13 (20)). In connexion with this episode Gregory reveals a fine trait in the Breton character: Canao prevented Chramn from joining in the battle against his own father, and himself died fighting in his guest's cause. The result was in favour of the Franks, and the Bretons agreed to pay tribute—for as long or short a time as should be convenient to themselves. In the year 580 Waroch, nephew of Canao, refused payment of tribute, and seized Vannes. The forces sent against him by Chilperic fared ill; but Waroch agreed to pay tribute if he might keep Vannes. The agreement seems to have been of little value; the Bretons went on raiding Frankish territory in Vilaine and on the lower Loire, withdrawing as usual with their plunder into the Armorican peninsula. After Chilperic's death an attempt was made by Guntram, as adoptive father of the young Lothar II, to check these raids, which had been particularly daring between 587 and 590. His commanders were disunited, and the Bretons were supported by Fredegund. The result was disaster to Guntram's armies. In 594, when the marches belonged to Childebert II, the Bretons again took the offensive. An effort was made to defend Rennes and Nantes, but it was apparently unsuccessful. The Bretons now consolidated their power, and lived as an independent people. For the next forty years they were left alone by the Franks, maintaining relations with Britain. But in 634 their king Judicael visited Dagobert and consented to acknowledge Frankish suzerainty. More than a hundred years later Frankish power was reasserted. Charles Martel took Nantes and Rennes; Pepin the Short occupied Vannes, placed a count there, and imposed tribute. But the Bretons continued rebellious throughout the Carolingian age.[1]

---

[1] Samson, Malo, Brienne, Tugdun, Pol, Gildas. For the influence of the Scots (Irish) upon these migrations see J. Loth, *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxi. (1900), pp. 548–9.

Syrians and Jews. People called Syrians are mentioned not infrequently by Gregory, but the word should probably be taken to include orientals of various origin from the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. They are found settled at Bordeaux, Orleans, and Paris, and must have been numerous at Marseilles.[2]

---

[1] The Bretons formed a loose confederacy under different chiefs, who only drew together under a single chief under the pressure of foreign war.

[2] However rich they became they were liable to be treated with scant consideration by the Franks. A pious Syrian of Bordeaux, named Euphronius, was exposed to extraordinary treatment at the hands of bishop Bertram and Mummolus (VII. 31). He was evidently a man of substance, as he offered to pay no less than two hundred pieces of gold rather than see his relics desecrated before his eyes. For Syrians in Gaul cf. A. Marignan, as above, p. 63.

A Syrian named Eusebius succeeded in getting elected bishop of Paris in 591 by bribing the electors, after which he distributed appointments among his own countrymen (X. 26). The Syrians, having come into the West for the same purpose as the Jews, naturally settled in the same places—the towns where most business could be done. But the latter people, divided more sharply from the Franks by their religion, were suspected and disliked by the Christian population, naturally returning this hostile feeling.[1] They were constantly accused of outrage upon sacred things; thus a charge was brought against a Jew of having pierced and carried off a picture of Christ (G. M. 22). The accusation of being the chief agents in the slave traffic and of holding Christian slaves for sale seems to be justified by letters of Gregory the Great to various correspondents, including Queen Brunhild and her two grandsons.[2] The Jews, however, would sometimes respond to generous treatment. Gregory relates that when his uncle died, the very Jews mourned his death.[3] On the entry of Guntram into Orleans in 585 a great crowd came to meet him with standards and flags, loudly singing his praises.[3] The Syrian and Hebrew tongues were heard in addition to the Latin, more particularly the Hebrew, the Jews evidently seeming to the king to have overdone their welcome, which he attributed to interested motives. Their synagogue had been destroyed in a religious disturbance by the Christians, and they looked to the king to rebuild it: 'which, by Heaven', said Guntram, 'I never will do'.

The Jews were sometimes exposed to forced conversion. Bishop Avitus, by giving an alternative of baptism or expulsion, converted five hundred at Clermont, for which he received a panegyric from Fortunatus.[1] In 583 Chilperic forced baptism upon the Jews of his kingdom. Even Priscus, his favoured provider of works of art, was imprisoned and made to promise to abjure his faith, though all Gregory's eloquence had previously failed to move him (VI. 5, 17). It is evident that the Jews engaged in the commerce of precious objects were too clever for their Gaulish patrons, whether Gallo-Roman or Frankish. The bad Bishop Cautinus of Clermont favoured them in the hope of making good bargains. They returned his flattery, and sold him their wares at prices above the real value.[2] They were also found among the medical profession, and here they rendered valuable service to the community.

---

[1] For the Jews cf. Marignan, as above, pp. 62–3; S. Dill, *Roman Soc. in Gaul in the Merov. Age*, pp. 244 ff., 469 ff.

[2] Ewald and Hartmann, ix. 213 and 215. It may be noted that the great Theodoric had protected the Jews in Italy as long as they did as they were done by and refrained from aggressive conduct. But he writes in a letter to the Jews of Milan: *quid Judaee supplicans temporalem quietem quaeris, si aeternam requiem invenire non possis?* (Cassiodorus, *Var.* v. 37). Cf. also his letters to the Jews of Genoa, *ibid.* ii. 27, and iv. 33. In the former he says that he cannot force them to change their religion: *quia nemo cogitur ut credat invitus*; in the latter he grants the privileges: *quae Judaicis institutis legum provida decrevit antiquitas.*

[3] VIII. 1. The Jews cried: 'Let all peoples worship thee, and bend the knee, and be subjected unto thee!' Guntram qualified the Jewish race as crafty, and ever intent on some ulterior aim (*subdolo semper sensu*).

The Empire. The East Roman Empire, though only for a time having frontiers conterminous with Gaul, may be mentioned first among the neighbours of the Merovingian kings. The emperors whose names are most conspicuous in the History are Justinian,[3] whose generals invade Italy and Spain (pp. 104–5, 182); his successor, Justin II (565–78), who with his consort Sophia, niece of the famous Theodora, presented to Radegund the relic of the True Cross, giving the nunnery at Poitiers its name, and is still preserved in that city (Vol. II, pp. 590, 595); Tiberius Constantine (578–82), who has a legendary reputation as a philanthropist (V. 13 (19)), perhaps based upon his liberal policy with regard to taxation; and Maurice (582–602),[4] who subsidized Childebert to invade Italy,[5] perhaps aided Gundovald the Pretender, and signed the diploma confirming the election as Pope of his old acquaintance Gregory the Great (X. 1).[1]

---

[1] *Carm.* v. 5. The Jews who accepted banishment rather than baptism withdrew to Marseilles. But fifteen years later the same alternative was presented to them there (Letter of Gregory the Great to Virgilius, archbishop of Arles, and Theodore, bishop of Marseilles, *Ep.* i. 45). The Pope disapproved of mass-conversion.

[2] IV. 12: *Iudaeis valde carus ac subditus erat* (i. e. Cautinus) *non pro salute, ut pastoris cura debet esse sollicita, sed pro comparandis speciebus, quas cum hic blandiretur, et illi se adulatores manifestissime declararent, maiori quam constabant pretio venumdabant.*

[3] Justin and Sophia were the donors of another famous object which has survived to our time; the gold cross in S. Peter's at Rome, which is also said to contain wood of the True Cross.

[4] Maurice was as famous for economy as Tiberius had been for liberality. Most of his reign was occupied with wars, the most formidable being the inherited Persian war and that against the Avars. His unremitting economy, which made him unpopular and endangered his empire, led to his murder in 602.

[5] Cf. G. Reverdy, 'Les relations de Childebert II et de Byzance', in *Revue historique*, cxiv (1913).

After the investment of Clovis with an honorary dignity, the only important relations of the East Roman Empire to the Merovingian kings were those connected with common action against the Lombards (p. 179). But the History mentions various occasions in which representatives or subjects of the empire and the Frankish kingdoms came into contact with each other.[2] In connexion with these, a few words may be said as to a possible complicity of the Byzantine emperor in the Gundovaldian plot (p. 179). The Pretender, who had resided some years in Constantinople, had been well received and recognized as of princely rank. When, in 582, he yielded to the persuasion of Guntram Boso and started on his ill-fated adventure, he took with him a treasure of suspicious size, which must in part at least have been due to imperial munificence, and may have been designed for political use. On this theory, Gundovald would have been no less the instrument of the Byzantine Court than of the aristocratic party in Gaul; the emperor may have considered that his interests might be served by the weakening of the Frankish kingdoms through further division. For the Byzantine occupation of territory in the South of Spain see below, p. 182, and note to IV. 5 (8).[2]

The Ostrogoths. This people had embraced Christianity while settled north of the Black Sea, to which region they had migrated from the north. They had acquired some culture, derived from East Christian and Iranian sources, the latter chiefly affecting their art. They entered Italy in 489, and under the rule of the capable Theodoric were constrained to live under a government largely influenced by Roman precedent.[3]

---

[1] Gregory had been representative (*apocrisiarius*, nuncio) of Pope Pelagius at Constantinople, where he lived some years, and wrote some of his works.

[2] Minor embassies passed between the courts, and individual Franks sojourned in Constantinople for their private advantage, e. g. Reovalis, the surgeon (X. 15). Constantinople was also the refuge of political exiles from the Teutonic kingdoms, or persons who thought it best to sojourn abroad for a while. Leander, bishop of Seville, went thither to escape King Leuvigild, returning after his death; John of Biclar the Chronicler was there for some years before 576. It is evident that there must always have been a small Teutonic community in the city. The papal *apocrisiarius* was the most distinguished foreign resident from the West, and usually, like Gregory the Great, he was a Roman.

[3] Cassiodorus (*Var.* iii. 23) claims for them that they combined the sagacity of the Romans and the valour of their own barbaric race (*sic semper fuerunt in*

We have seen that Theodoric attempted to prevent war among the Teutonic nations by diplomacy and by a system of matrimonial alliances ; we have seen that when Clovis forced war upon the Visigoths, he intervened with effect in favour of his grandson Amalaric,[1] for whom he saved Provence and Narbonne (p. 94). The death of Theodoric in 526 marked the beginning of trouble for his nation.[2]

In 537, Witigis, threatened in Italy by the landing of Belisarius, made his cession of Provence to the Franks (p. 104). In 538 they rewarded him by indirect support against the Byzantine forces; but in 539 there followed the invasion of Northern Italy by Theudebert,[3] in which that king treated the Goths as no less his enemies than the imperial forces (p. 105). In 553–4 they suffered the irruption of Buccelin and Leuthar, and were subdued by Narses, the general of Justinian. Little more than a quarter of a century had elapsed since the Ostrogothic kingdom under Theodoric had been the first of barbaric powers in Europe and the most respected for the civilized methods of its government.

The *Lombards* were Suevic in race, and had once in Pannonia been allies of the empire ; before their invasion of Italy in 568 they had allied themselves with the Avars to destroy the Gepidae. Their invasion of the northern plain of Italy was really a colonization, for they came as a whole nation, with their

---

laudum medio constituti ut et Romanorum prudentiam caperent et virtutem gentium possiderent). Other people are to imitate the good Goths : *qui foris proelia, intus norunt exercere modestiam.* Probably the judgement is in the main true : the Goths were much more civilized than the Franks. But we should avoid the error of exaggerating their civilization.

[1] Alaric, father of Amalaric, had married a daughter of Theodoric. The Ostrogothic king was not averse to enlarging his own domains across the Alps, taking advantage of the war between Franks and Burgundians for this purpose (p. 99).

[2] Theodoric was the most enlightened of the barbaric kings. Yet he owed much to his Roman ministers, and not least to the excellent but sententious Cassiodorus, the mouthpiece of his government, from whose official letters, written in his master's name, we learn so much of Italian affairs in the early sixth century. The barbarian element in the king was but too apparent in the official murders of Symmachus and Boethius, and we seem to gather from more than one passage in Cassiodorus that highly placed Goths in the provinces did not always manifest the civic virtues (cf. Cassiodorus, *Var.* iv. 39). The less favourable aspect of Ostrogothic civilization is emphasized by F. Martroye (*L'Occident à l'époque byzantine : Goths et Vandales*, Paris, 1904).

[3] Numbers of Theudebert's men were pagans, and some of them, before crossing a river, sacrificed Ostrogothic women and children.

The various Frankish invasions of Italy are well described in T. Hodgkin's *Italy and her invaders*, vol. v.

wives and children, into a country much depopulated by war.[1] The first contact with the Franks took place not long before the death of Alboin, the last member of their old royal line and their leader into the promised land. Alboin was succeeded in 573 by an elected king, Duke Cleph, or Clepho, who only reigned a year, after which the people, who still held the old Teutonic view of a king as a war-chief, unnecessary in peace, made no election, and the Lombard territory was left for ten years to a number of irresponsible dukes, who marauded and plundered where they pleased.[2] The threat of invasion from the kingdoms of Guntram and Childebert, and fear of hostile action by the East Roman Emperor, put an end to these anarchic conditions, and the Lombards once more elected a king, Authari, son of the last king, Clepho. They acted on an old principle, long pursued by the pagan Saxons, of choosing a king as commander-in-chief for the period of the war ; [3] but on this occasion they decided to make the kingship permanent; the new king was endowed with large domain lands, and received Pavia as his capital city. To his queen, Theudelind, a princess of Bavaria, was due the conversion of the Lombards,[4] which did much to civilize this people. The Franks came and went in 584 (p. 122), having to content themselves with a payment of tribute. They came and went in 588 and 590 (p. 130) ; it was not by these disorderly armies that the Lombards were destined to fall. Their later history is well known. The continual pressure which they applied to the popes led Gregory III to propose to Charles Martel that he should take the place of the Byzantine emperor, now regarded as too weak a protector for the city of S. Peter. The conclusion of the new agreement was left to another pope and another emperor. The

---

[1] Five thousand of them had served with Narses in his invasion of Italy in 552, and some of these men had doubtless reported the desirability of the Po valley (cf. Oman, *The Dark Ages* (1923), p. 182).

[2] It was at this time that the Lombard duchies in Central and Southern Italy were founded.

[3] Celtic peoples had the same custom. The Bretons only united under a single leader when war was upon them.

[4] After the death of Authari, she consulted the interests of her new country by marrying Duke Agilulf of Turin, who thus became king and enjoyed a long reign during which he showed political sagacity. Theudelind received letters from Gregory the Great, who sent her presents, including a gold textus-cover with decoration of garnets in the style known as *orfèvrerie cloisonnée*, still to be seen in the treasury of the cathedral of Monza. She had a son, Adalwald, who succeeded his father Agilulf in 615 and reigned for ten years.

Lombard power was finally broken by Charles the Great in 774.

The *Visigoths* had been a power in Gaul for a century before Clovis; they entered Aquitaine in 412 and were conquered by him in 511. Some of their kings enjoyed a reputation for capacity and moderation, witness the Theuderic praised by Sidonius Apollinaris in a well-known letter,[1] but the aggressiveness and religious intolerance of Euric had somewhat tarnished their fair name; the events following their defeat by the Franks are stated on another page (p. 93). The Arianism of the Visigoths placed them in a position of embarrassment as a small minority in a population of Catholic Hispano-Romans; they lived in estrangement from the natives of the country, and from the Catholic clergy.[2] They suffered another grave disadvantage in the extinction of their old royal line at the death of Amalaric. They now depended on elective kings, who lacked the prestige of royal descent, and this led to much insubordination among dukes and counts ruling the provinces. These provincial governors quarrelled among themselves and rebelled against the kings; there was no such centralized royal power as existed in the Frankish kingdoms. Thus until the sole reign of the able but ruthless Leuvigild (572–86) Spain was a weak country, inviting invasion from aggressive neighbours; all the more that, in the north-west, there were always upon the flank of the Visigoths, the Suevi of Galicia, under their own kings, not finally subdued until 585, and the Basques, who as on the far-side of the Pyrenees, remained unsubduable (p. 173).[3] Despite their weakness before Leuvigild's time, the Visigoths showed spirit against the Franks, soon recovering Septimania after Childebert's invasion of 531 (p. 103), and escaping dangers which might have followed Theudebert's raid of ten years later

---

[1] *Letters*, tr. Dalton, vol. i, p. 2. The first capital was Toulouse, where culture was diffused by Gallo-Romans. A summary of Visigothic history, condensed into few words but bringing out all the salient points, is to be found in Oman's *The Dark Ages*, ch. 8; the longer summary by Altamira in vol. ii of the C. M. H. should also be consulted.

[2] This estrangement accentuated the exclusiveness of the Visigoths. No Hispano-Romans were appointed to high offices until after Recared's conversion.

[3] The Suevi, the first Teutonic conquerors of Roman Spain, held the north-west of the country, Galicia and Lusitania. Their king Mir joined Hermangild's rebellion, with fatal results to himself and his kingdom. The Basques on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees showed the same sturdy independence as their brothers to the north of that range (p. 173).

(III. 10). But the dissension between Athanagild, the chief duke in the south of the country, and King Agila, resulted in an invitation from the former to the Emperor Justinian, who accepted it, but refused to withdraw his troops when expected to do so; large parts of Southern Spain were thus left in the control of a foreign power.[1]

The position was altered for the better with the accession of the masterful Leuvigild.[2] He drove back the Byzantine forces and inflicted defeats upon the Suevi, whom he finally overthrew in the year before his death. Against rebellious counts or nobles he pursued a policy of ‘ thorough ’, putting to death all who were likely to be dangerous. His throne was only once seriously imperilled, when his son Hermangild embraced orthodoxy under the persuasion of his Frankish consort, Ingund (p. 209). The prince received the support of his uncle, Leander, bishop of Seville; he now enjoyed the sympathy of the orthodox Church, and of the Hispano-Romans as a whole. This sympathy was already a source of great strength, but it was reinforced by an agreement with the Byzantine forces in Spain and the active help both of Suevi and the Basques. Nothing but the energy and military skill of Leuvigild could have overcome such a combination; but he won a complete victory. Hermangild, taking refuge in the fortress of Osset, near Seville, was betrayed by his Byzantine friends; for a time his life was spared, but in 585 he was murdered. When the Franks again fought against the Visigoths they found themselves opposed to a kingdom freed from the effects of political disunion, and now of superior military strength. The armies of Leuvigild and his competent son Recared rendered an easy account of Guntram's undisciplined levies.[3] Guntram began his unfortunate attacks in the last years of Leuvigild, before the Visigoths abandoned Arianism. The conversion of Recared in 587 completed the consolidation of Visigothic monarchy begun by Leuvigild when he crushed the power of the nobles. It has been noted that Recared had a Hispano-Roman mother (p. 182, n. 2), and her early persuasion may have influenced his mind. But probably he was astute enough to perceive what powerful support his brother had received from the Catholics, and to understand that the adoption of one form of Christianity throughout the country would unite the peoples and strengthen the foundations of his kingdom. The History of the Franks leaves the Visigoths united and powerful. The Franks were never able to follow up the first great blow of Clovis, and it was left for the Arabs finally to overthrow the Visigothic power.

---

[1] The Byzantine territory in the south of Spain, though much reduced by Leuvigild, was not wholly retaken until the beginning of the seventh century.

[2] Leuvigild, though an Arian, married a provincial Roman lady, Theodosia, who became the mother of Hermanfrid and Recared. He married Godiswinth (the Goisvinth of Gregory), widow of Athanagild, and mother of Brunhild, queen of Austrasia.

[3] Guntram's pretext for attacking the Visigoths in Septimania was, as stated on p. 130, anger at the murder of Hermangild, the husband of his niece Ingund. But he also raised the cry of ‘ Down with the Arians ! ’ in imitation of his grandfather Clovis, perhaps to stimulate the enthusiasm of his armies.

The *Saxons*, who still remained pagans, were unquiet and formidable neighbours on the Austrasian border. Their confederacy along the Weser towards Hesse and Thuringia accepted the suzerainty of the Ripuarian kings after their conquest of the latter country.[1] But the disastrous expedition of Buccelin and Leuthar into Italy (p. 107), by weakening the position of the Eastern Franks, gave the Saxons a chance to revolt, which they seized soon after Lothar I inherited the Ripuarian kingdom on the death of his nephew Theudebald (p. 108). So began a trial of strength between Frank and Saxon which lasted for two and a half centuries, the former determined to assert an overlordship, the latter always resisting, and, if defeated, shaking off a hateful suzerainty at the first favourable moment. The pertinacity of the Saxons, only overcome with the utmost difficulty by Charles the Great in 803, cannot fail to strike any reader of Frankish history. While other Teutonic tribes became Christians and slackened in resistance, the Saxons were inveterate in heathenism. They felt themselves the sole defenders of the religion of Odin against the renegade champions of Christianity; they hated the Franks as apostates, and fought not merely for their liberty, but for their ancestral gods.[2] Only a few years after their success against Lothar, the rebellion of Chramn against his father (p. 109) encouraged them again to take the offensive, but for the moment they were beaten.[1] Saxons followed Sigibert against his brother Chilperic, perhaps more for booty than for any other reason.

---

[1] After Theuderic and Lothar I conquered Thuringia, the Saxons overran the northern part of that country, which they retained.

[2] Cf. H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, pp. 28, 29. In their determined adherence to their old religion, they had always the moral support of their Scandinavian neighbours.

The real danger for the Saxons began long after the time of Gregory, when the great military leaders of Austrasia proceeded to the subjection of all peoples threatening their frontiers. The Saxons and the Frisians were the most important among these. Pepin of Heristal defeated the Frisians and made them tributaries; it was the time of his collaboration with the undaunted Anglo-Saxon missionary Willibrord, whose religious ardour greatly served Austrasian political aims. After the death of Pepin in 714 the hatred of the Neustrians for Austrasian supremacy led them to call in the Saxons and the Frisians against their rivals; but the influence of a second Anglo-Saxon missionary, Boniface, and the strength of the new ruler, Charles Martel, brought more peaceful conditions. Yet the Saxons and their neighbours were untameable, and their renewed revolts led Charles to a great Frisian campaign in 734, when the sacred groves were cut down, the temples burned, and many thousands killed. Between 718 and 729 Charles had to march four times into the Saxon lands. The efforts of Boniface to convert them had but a partial success. In 743 they joined Odilo of Bavaria in an all-German movement, but were beaten by Carloman, and underwent enforced baptism on a large scale. In 748 Pepin invaded their country, this time joined by Frisians, and delivered a shattering blow. In 753 he repeated the success, and the Saxons consented to receive Christian priests. But five years later their recalcitrance brought him back, and again they promised submission.[2] But between 760 and 772, the Franks being occupied in Aquitaine, they continually harassed the Christians and encroached upon Frankish territory. In the latter year, Charles the Great invaded their lands, and destroyed the Irmensul, or column of Irmen, in its sacred grove; once more they consented to admit missionaries. But in 774 their bitter struggle was renewed, to last another thirty years, with alternations of agreement and rupture, acceptance and fierce repudiation of Christianity. In 795 Charles resorted to mass deportations, repeated in 798, 799, and 803, about which time many Saxons took refuge in Denmark among their Scandinavian kinsmen. The Saxons were now the remnant of a people scattered and peeled, and when Louis the Pious succeeded Charles they at last responded to a gentler treatment, not joining any of the revolts against him. On the death of Louis, a temporary revival of paganism was permitted by Lothar, who wished to attract Saxon recruits to his armies. But in 842–3 the suppression of a final Saxon revolt extinguished the flame of Saxon independence. The torch was now taken up by the Scandinavians, who, known by the name of Northmen, were to carry the fear of the worshippers of Odin all down the western half of France.[1] This brief digression on the story of the pagan Saxons is not without bearing upon the History; it helps us to understand the difficulties experienced by quite powerful Frankish leaders like Lothar I and Sigibert. The Saxons were the most obstinate and enduring of all the Germans.

---

[1] It was not long after this that a number of Saxons, who feared that their liberty was threatened, went into Italy and joined the Lombards, taking part in the raids of that people into the south-east of Gaul (cf. iv. 29 (42)).

[2] The apparently incurable perfidy of the Saxons is partly explained by their primitive tribal conditions. There was no political centralization; they were led by a number of loosely federated chiefs, and the promise made by one of these was not held binding by the others (cf. Martin, *Hist.*, as above, p. 258). Similar conditions influenced the action of the Bretons.

The *Thuringians*, allied in blood to the Herulians and Warni, and occupying territory on the Saal and Upper Weser, were subdued by Theuderic and his brother Lothar I in 531 (p. 101), the former king becoming suzerain of the southern part of Thuringia on the rivers Werra and Unstrut, the Saxons overrunning the northern territory. The Thuringians joined the Saxons in their revolt after the ill-success of the Italian expedition led by Buccelin and Leuthar (p. 183); but they remained under a more or less nominal suzerainty to the Austrasian kings during the period covered by the History.

The *Bavarians* settled in the sixth century between the Danube and the Noric Alps, were probably made tributary by Theudebert in 543. They were included in 574 in the host of pagan auxiliaries from Germany which Sigibert led against Chilperic; at this time they were in nominal subordination to the Ripuarian Franks. In 590 they rose against Childebert II after the disaster to that king's army in Lombardy, but were defeated. They succeeded, however, in loosening the tie which bound them to Austrasia and at the close of the seventh century became practically free. During the period covered by the History, the Bavarians[1] were still pagans; they were partly converted, about a century after Gregory's death, by Rudpert, bishop of Worms (696), and their christianization was carried further in 739, after they had been temporarily subdued by Charles Martel. Prince Odilo led a war for independence, having as his followers, in addition to his own people, Alamanni, Saxons, and even Slavs (743), but the revolt was suppressed by Pepin and Carloman. In the time of Charles the Great, the Bavarians, under Tassilo, attempted a coalition with the Huns, Avars, and Slavs to free Germany and Italy from the Franks. The attempt failed; Tassilo was tonsured and sent to the monastery of Jumièges, his country being divided among counts. In the next reign, Louis the Pious made his son Lothar king of Bavaria.

---

[1] The Danes are only mentioned once in the History, the occasion being the piratical descent of Chrocolaic on the territory of Theuderic about the lower Rhine in 515. Chrocolaic is identical with Hygelac, kinsman of Beowulf, the hero of the well-known Anglo-Saxon poem.

The Avars. In 565–6 Sigibert was compelled to give battle to this Eastern people,[2] now threatening Thuringia. They had settled for a while in the Dobruja, receiving a yearly payment from Justinian for services rendered against other barbaric peoples. When the payment ceased, after the Emperor Justinian's death, they moved to the north-west, subduing Bohemia, and making it their base for an advance against the Eastern Franks. In 565–6 they were at first defeated by Sigibert. But in a second engagement they turned the tables, and the Frankish king escaped from a dangerous position chiefly because the Avar Chagan wished to join the Lombards in a campaign against the Gepidae (p. 112).[3] This campaign was successful; and while the Lombards triumphed in Italy, the Avars in 568 became masters of Hungary,[4] and held the whole line of the Danube from Vienna to the Black Sea. They now became dangerous enemies of the East Roman Empire, at various times ravaging the Balkan peninsula, and in 626 besieging Constantinople. After their success against Sigibert we hear no more of them in Gregory's pages.[1] But about the time of his death the Avars attacked Thuringia from their new seats, and Brunhild, then preoccupied with other cares, was compelled to buy them off. They remained ill neighbours to the peoples about them until Carolingian times, when in 796 Charles the Great's army from Italy captured their royal village between the Danube and the Theiss, with the fabulous treasure which it contained.[2] Not many years afterwards the remnant of these tribes, once the terror of the world, was settled by the great emperor in Lower Pannonia, under a Christian chief whose baptismal name had nothing of the Tartar in its sound.

---

[1] The Bavarians (*Baiuvari*) were composed of Marcomanni and Quadi, driven westward into Noricum and Rhaetia by Slavs about 500 (Jordanes, *Getica*, 280).

[2] Gregory, with 'Fredegar', calls them Huns (*Chuni*). Like the Huns, the Avars were a Mongolian people, who came into Europe by way of the Don and the country north of the Black Sea.

[3] Gregory attributes his escape solely to his persuasive power and diplomatic ability. This is an explanation probably derived from Frankish legend.

[4] T. Peisker, in C. M. H., ii, p. 436.

The British, Irish, and Anglo-Saxons. The old regular communications of Gaul with the British Isles and Ireland were interrupted during the earlier period of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. The continual wars first between the invaders and the British, then between the Teutonic kings themselves, broke off the peaceful commerce across the British Channel; intercourse of some kind must gradually have been renewed in the later fifth century, but while the Anglo-Saxons remained pagan it must have remained slight and irregular even in the century of Gregory of Tours.[3] It is significant that the History contains only two allusions to England; in each case it is stated that Bertha, daughter of Charibert, was married 'to a king in Kent'. Gregory was probably as ignorant of events in the British Isles as his great namesake and contemporary, whose curious inquiries with regard to England in the well-known episode of the young Anglo-Saxons sent to be sold as slaves in Rome show that to him it was an unknown country.[1] The Celtic people from Southern England who had crossed the Channel to escape invaders at home and settled in Brittany (p. 174) were probably regarded by him as Bretons, and not associated in idea with the British Isles. Even Ireland, where there had been no interference with Christianity, is ignored in his pages, though the great missionary Columban had begun his work in Gaul before he died, and Columban was a spiritual power of no small moment to the Gallican Church (pp. 356, 368). Relations with Britain only began to increase as a result of Augustine's mission and the establishment of a permanent connexion with Rome. The commendatory letters given to Mellitus by Gregory the Great were addressed to, among other persons, Queen Brunhild and her grandsons Theuderic and Theudebert, kings of Burgundy and Austrasia, to Lothar II, king of Neustria, the son of Fredegund, and to various bishops of Frankish sees. Among these bishops the metropolitan of Arles had a special importance for the Roman Church in Britain; it was he who consecrated Augustine.[2] Before Augustine's arrival, messages to Rome from Queen Bertha, or those with her, implied that a desire on the English side for instruction in Christianity had not met sufficient response from the Gallican bishops.[3] The censure would seem deserved if, as suggested above, the Frankish dialect was at this time intelligible in Kent, or if competent interpreters were easy to obtain. The intercourse established as a result of the Roman mission was maintained by the constant passage of bishops and others between Rome and Britain, and by the hospitality accorded to them in Frankish monasteries or episcopal cities as they passed through. Franks occupied English sees; Agilbert, who had studied in Ireland, was given a bishopric by Coinwalch, king of Wessex.[4] When he returned to France, Wini, who had been ordained in that country, was made bishop of Winchester, in which see he was followed by Eleutherius, nephew of Agilbert,

---

[1] It is interesting to note that their success against Sigibert is ascribed by Gregory to their magical powers. This belief in the magical powers of peoples from the Far East and extreme North was of early origin and late survival, witness the fame of the Lapland witches.

[2] This treasure represented centuries of pillage in different parts of Europe. Charles distributed the spoil with a lavish hand among his chief subjects. He also sent a large part to the Pope, who used it for the enrichment of churches with sacred vessels, and in the decoration of the Lateran.

[3] The fact may be remembered that Augustine brought Franks with him to England as interpreters, and that they were able to make themselves understood. They may possibly have been men chosen because they had already some acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxons.

[1] The British Isles were regarded by many in Europe as the mysterious bourne of the departed. Procopius (*De bell. Goth.* iv. 20) mentions the belief that the souls of the dead were conveyed from Armorica to Britain.

[2] The metropolitan who perfomed the ceremony was Aetherius (Bede, *Hist.* i. 27); his successor was Virgilius, to whom the Pope wrote a letter commending Augustine (*ibid.* c. 28).

[3] Cf. H. H. Howorth, *Saint Augustine of Canterbury*, p. 48. Gregory's letters to Brunhild are conveniently summarized in the same writer's *Saint Gregory the Great* (1912), pp. 157, 163–6, 174, 179.

[4] Bede, *Hist. Eccl. Angl.* iii. 6. This was in 635.

who was consecrated by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury. In 627, Sigibert, brother of Eorpwald, king of the East Saxons, and banished by the king, went to live in France, and there was converted.[1] On his accession to the throne, he established schools in imitation of those seen by him in France.[2] In 633 infant princes of Northumbria were sent by their mother to France to be brought up there, King Dagobert being her friend.[3] English princesses became nuns in monasteries in France, especially at Brie, Chelles, and Andelys.[4] Earcongota, daughter of Earconbert, king of Kent, was a nun at Brie. Sethrid and Ethelberga, East Anglian princesses, were 'for their virtues' actually made abbesses of Brie. Heresuid, sister of S. Hilda, was a nun in the monastery of Cale.[5] English clergy studied in France, or were consecrated there. Wilfrid spent much time with Archbishop Dalfin at Lyons.[6] He was later (665) sent by Alfrid, king of Northumbria, to France to be consecrated in that kingdom, the ceremony being performed at Compiègne by the Agilbert who had been in Wessex but was now bishop of Paris. The same Agilbert in 664 entertained Theodore on his way to England to become Archbishop of Canterbury.[7] Benedict Biscop was for two years at Lérins.[8] On his repeated visits to Rome he stopped at various cities, among others at Vienne; it was from France that he brought masons to build his stone church; to France he sent for glass makers to glaze the windows. But the powerful Anglo-Saxon influence on the Frankish Church and state was later, dating from post-Merovingian times, and associated with the names of Willibrord, Boniface (Winfrith), and Alcuin. Boniface not only laboured hard to convert the Saxons, but in 742, at the request of Pepin and Carloman, reorganized the Church, thrown into disorder by the policy of Charles Martel. Under his guidance and the direction of Rome, moral force and discipline were restored; the work of Columban had been overwhelmed in the rude years of perpetual fighting under Pepin and Charles Martel, and the honour of raising the Church in Gaul from the morass in which it was sunk fell once more to an immigrant from beyond the sea. But the greatest of the Anglo-Saxons to influence Gaul was Alcuin, whom Charles the Great met at Parma in 781 and persuaded to restore learning in his empire, as, in the reign of his father, Boniface had restored religion. In the eighth century England played a great part in the spread of civilization through the Frankish dominions, spreading the knowledge which she had derived partly from the Irish founders of Lindisfarne, partly from the successors of Augustine, notably Theodore of Tarsus.

---

[1] *Ibid.* ii. 15.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 20.

[3] *Ibid.* iii. 18.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 8. This was because few monasteries were as yet being built in England.

[5] Or Cala (Chelles). *Ibid.* iv. 23. Hilda and Heresuid were daughters of Hereric, nephew of King Edwin of Northumbria.

[6] *Ibid.* iii. 25; v. 19. Dalfin wished to make Wilfrid his heir.

[7] *Ibid.* ii. 1.

[8] Bede, *Lives of the Holy Abbots of Weremouth and Yarrow.*

III

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEROVINGIAN KINGDOMS

a. Crown, Church, and Aristocracy.

THE principles on which a Frankish kingdom was governed after the time of Clovis differed profoundly from those followed by the old German tribes, as revealed in the *Germania* of Tacitus; the popular element was reduced to a shadow, the royal power grew in substance. Before the time of Clovis, we seem to recognize among the Franks an organization similar to that which long afterwards survived among their neighbours and obstinate enemies, the pagan Saxons. The Saxon system was based upon loose confederations of tribes or cantons, the tribes being led in peace by local chiefs, or petty kings, and only in war by a supreme ruler; on the outbreak of hostilities a commander of the whole confederacy was chosen to ensure national unity in the face of the common danger.[1] Before the final victories of Clovis, the Franks are found under the leadership of petty kings, all of whom the conqueror proceeded to remove from his path in order to secure his position as permanent leader of the whole nation.

The Crown now ceased to be elective unless extraordinary circumstances interfered with regular succession. The old choice of the king by the free Franks at the tribal assembly fell into desuetude after the time of Clovis[2] in all cases where a king left a suitable male heir behind him;[3] under normal conditions, royalty became hereditary. But the ancient principle of choice by an assembly was occasionally revived when there was no apparent heir, or when a succession was suddenly changed, as a result of war or even of usurpation.

---

[1] A similar state of affairs seems to have long continued among the Celtic Bretons.

[2] Popular election was formally abandoned in 751, when Pépin le Bref was anointed by Pope Stephen III. But in fact it had been abandoned as a regular practice after the complete conquest of Gaul (Pfister, in Lavisse, *Hist. de la France ill.* II. i, p. 174).

[3] It was not necessary for the mother to be of royal or even noble birth: *regis vocantur liberi qui de regibus fuerant procreati* (V. 20).

Thus Sigibert was invited to become king of Soissons after he had driven Chilperic out of that kingdom, whereupon he was raised on the shield, and carried round the assemblage at Vitry (IV. 36 (51)). In this case, the lawful king and his heir-male were both alive, and it was necessary to consecrate the election of a new king at Soissons by a ceremonial act.[1] While, therefore, the government of the Church in the main followed old precedents in the appointment of new bishops, the element of choice had rarely a part in determining the succession to the throne. Hereditary kings found themselves absolute, but their absolutism was insecure, as all else in an unstable age. They were free from constitutional checks, but a landed aristocracy growing in power was first a latent, and soon an open menace. The notables had only to unite to enforce their will upon the Crown, but their dispersion through the country, their turbulence and their anarchic spirit gave the monarchy a respite which it was long suffered to misuse. Despotism was inevitable when the military leader of the Frankish people, after rapid victories, settled his followers in the promised land; equally certain was its danger when the strongest among them became territorial magnates surrounded by large numbers of personal dependents. There came a time when the royal power could only have been fully asserted by a standing army, which no Merovingian king possessed. But during the sixth century the sons and grandsons of Clovis were still absolute monarchs as long as they gave the great landholders the licence they desired. The sense of loyalty to the royal house was still a living force; only in Austrasia, where it was weakest, was the throne seriously threatened. To a man like Chilperic, ruling in loyal Neustria, an almost unchecked despotism was possible, even in the other kingdoms the wearer of the crown held a position more uncontrolled than that of his remoter ancestors.

When the kings began to take alarm at the growing independence of their chief subjects, they naturally cast about for means to strengthen their own position. They gave ear to the counsel of astute Gallo-Romans, who suggested the adoption of Roman methods, by which Gallo-Roman and Frank might be placed on a more equal footing, especially with regard to taxation; this advice was first seriously considered by the Austrasian court, which was the most threatened by the rise of aristocratic power. The Crown to some extent secured itself by throwing open high offices to capable men of all classes, even the humblest. Such a policy was well advised; but by the middle of the sixth century the magnates were already powerful enough to neutralize any danger, even though they were not a hereditary nobility, had no permanent organization, and only combined when an emergency arose. Even Queen Brunhild, with all her superiority of intelligence, was beaten by them in the end—though she made a determined effort to gain supremacy.

---

[1] The pretender Gundovald attempted to assert his claim by causing himself to be raised on a shield in the same way (VII. 10).

But if the Crown did not succeed in depriving the aristocracy of their privileges, its own position in Gregory's time was still very strong. Although on serious questions the king would summon a council (p. 195), yet he was far more free to please himself than the chiefs of the pagan Franks had ever been; by the great advantage of his religious orthodoxy he was not, like his Visigothic neighbours, estranged from his Romanized subjects and from the Church, whose rulers they obeyed. He had not to fear the sullen passive resistance which, until the time of Recared, so terribly weakened the position of the Crown in Spain (p. 181). On the contrary, his Gallo-Roman subjects were a support to his ambition in so far as they were traditionally in favour of a strong centralized government, and opposed to the anarchic tendencies of the unruly Frankish magnates. The king was supreme head of the armies, when raised. He made war or peace, though he might ask the advice of a council of bishops and notables if he decided to summon one. He chose ministers and officers as he pleased, and enriched his treasury by taking bribes for an appointment.[1] He held the Church under his control, convening episcopal councils and interfering with the elections to vacant sees (pp. 288, 300). He was above justice, and had arbitrary power of life and death. He could change old laws and make new ones. His tribunal, over which he might preside in person if he so desired, was the final court of appeal.[2] No individual, however strong, could prevail against him, for he was the greatest and wealthiest of landowners. He represented force, and by force he ruled.[1] The one individual feared by him was the assassin.[2] To himself he was something more than an ordinary mortal. When Lothar I, son of Clovis, lay on his deathbed he expressed peevish astonishment that his majesty must really perish: 'Well-a-day!' he cried, 'what think ye? What manner of ruler is that in heaven who in this wise causeth great kings such as we to die?'[3]

---

[1] Cf. VIII. 18, where the late count of Clermont buys a dukedom: *datis pro eo multis muneribus*.

[2] Here too the king was amenable to bribes. Cf. IV. 32, 47.

In early Merovingian times there was nowhere any patriotism or love of country. The kings treated their kingdoms as private estates to be exploited to the full for their personal advantage.[4] They were dangerously free, and if they could have established an absolutism according to Roman precedent Gaul might have been ruled by their line for a very long period. But their despotism was precarious. It only lasted as long as it did because the powers which were to destroy it were not yet able to unite. These powers were the Church and the aristocracy. Just over a century after the death of Clovis they joined forces and put an end to all royal dreams of permanent absolute rule (p. 134). In after times the aristocracy grew strong enough to dispense with the aid of Church and stand alone.

During the sixth century the Church used her influence to control the arbitrary and violent action of the kings.[5] Only a few bishops openly took part in politics, the most conspicuous being Egidius of Reims (p. 86). But the ambitions of Brunhild alarmed the bishops, who further disapproved of arbitrary royal action in Church affairs, for instance in episcopal elections (p. 288). In the early years of the seventh century they threw in their lot with the Austrasian magnates who had renounced allegiance to their own royal house, thus making Lothar II, the son of Chilperic and Fredegund, the nominal sovereign of all Gaul. But having thus in appearance exalted the Crown, the parties to the alliance proceeded to make it harmless to themselves; the fifth Council of Paris (A. D. 615) set the monarchy upon the path of decadence which led to the last degradation under the tutelage of the Mayors of the Palace. Though before this time the bishops were usually too busy in their dioceses to take action as a body in questions of policy, they were not altogether aloof from public affairs. When a king was perplexed, he might call an assembly of notables and bishops, as Guntram did after the disgraceful failure of his armies against the Visigoths in Septimania.[1] The frequency with which their advice was sought on other occasions must have increased the consciousness of their power in the kingdoms. Between 615 and the time of Charles Martel the Church had its share of influence in the State. Under Pepin the Short, the episcopal council even assumed the character of a council of state,[2] a natural development in a country where the clergy were the depositaries of such higher education as existed, and more interested than any other class in the preservation of law and order. After this period the fortunes of the Church fluctuated; she passed from the humiliations suffered under Charles Martel to the privileged position accorded to her by Pepin and Carloman, Charles the Great, and Louis the Pious. Though better organized, she had no such formidable and continuous influence as that of the fighting aristocracy, from whose interests her own diverged in proportion as they approximated to those of the Crown.

---

[1] We smile at Ruinart, who ascribes to the subjects of the Merovingian king his own loyal feelings towards the French monarchy. In the Preface to his edition of Gregory (§ 15) he declares that the Merovingians reigned not through pride of place or wealth: *sed amore in populos et mutuo popularium in Regem amore qui in Francorum cordibus a natura insitus videtur.*

[2] Cf. Guntram's speech to the Parisians (VII. 8). The assassination of kings did not become a *consuetudo* as in Visigothic Spain (III. 30).

[3] *Wa! Quid putatis, qualis est ille rex caelestis qui sic tam magnos reges interficit?* (IV. 14 (21)).

[4] This comes out clearly in the manner in which they and their kin quartered themselves and their retinues on the cities in which they stayed and requisitioned supplies when they travelled long distances.

[5] Especially valuable was the work of the bishops as mediators between the Franks and the Gallo-Romans who formed the bulk of their own flocks. Both in their opposition to high-handed and brutal action on the part of dukes, counts, and their underlings, and in the part which they played as judges in their own courts, they helped to establish permanent good relations between different sections of the population, and to secure fair play for those who were not of Frankish birth.

In their resistance to the growth of royal power the leaders of the Frankish aristocracy worked by a combination of conspiracy and violence. The intrigues of Egidius, bishop of Reims, who openly joined their party, and those which brought Gundovald from Constantinople to Gaul, illustrate their political methods; the intimidation of Duke Lupus in the presence of the queen, and the plot of Rauching, Ursio, and Berthefred against the young Childebert II, their methods of violence.[1] Their most elaborate plot, of which the pretender Gundovald was the central figure, was set on foot in Austrasia in the hope of weakening or destroying King Guntram, at this time the foremost representative of royal power. But Guntram proved too strong for them; and it was only after his death, soon followed by that of Childebert II, that the aristocratic party gained a definite predominance through the fatal civil wars between the young kings of Austrasia and Neustria. The period of confusion which ensued brought the magnates their opportunity; in 614 they rose to power in Austrasia after the cruel death of the old queen Brunhild.[2] When all the Frankish kingdoms were nominally united under Dagobert, that king made an attempt to break the power of the party, relying on the support of the freemen and of the Gallo-Romans But he found the opposition far too powerful, and in Austrasia, at least, he was forced to rely upon the support of Pepin, Mayor of the Palace. The importance of Austrasia to the two later Pepins and Charles Martel increased the influence and the privileges of the Frankish aristocracy, which led and recruited the national armies. The genius of Charles the Great established a constitutional balance for a period of fifty years;[3] but after the death of his son Louis the Pious in 840 there was no longer

---

[1] VIII. 30: *conjunctis episcopis necnon et majoribus natu.*

[2] The Council held at Vernon on the Seine in 755 passed administrative measures of importance having no exclusive application to the Church.

[1] In this plot the cowardly assassination of the king was to give the signal for the armed domination of the kingdom. After the murder of Childebert, his young sons were to be placed under the chief conspirators, nominally acting as governors. The immediate cause of the plot was Queen Brunhild's announcement after the death of her son's governor (*nutritor*), Wandelen, that she intended henceforth to govern the boy herself (VIII. 22); Wandelen had succeeded Gogo (p. 88), appointed by the notables after the death of Sigibert in order that he might protect their interests at court.

[2] The resolutions passed in 615 by the assembly of notables and bishops in council at Paris show us the aristocratic party as an organized force. Their predominance over the Crown is shown by the removal of the appointment to the office of Mayor of the Palace from royal control, and the insistence on the condition that the king should no longer appoint as counts men strange to the district, but only local landowners of their party.

[3] Charles endeavoured, in 802, to check the rise of a feudal aristocracy by requiring a personal oath of allegiance from every free man in his dominions. But even he could not prevail against the tendency of the age, and the first definite steps towards feudalism were taken in his reign. In Merovingian times the holding of benefices (p. 103) had imposed no direct obligation to military service, which was rendered from loyalty alone; the duty of the holder was not bound up with the tenure of his lands.

any effective check to the increase of tendencies foreshadowing the feudalism of later times. The kings who followed Louis ruined themselves and their country by outbidding each other to secure the services of the warlike aristocracy. Once more, as in the time of Charles Martel, Church lands and dignities were showered upon them ; the Crown only preserved its position in a disintegrating society because the nobles were still too self-seeking to unite for the advantage of their order. Crown and Church alike had failed to secure the stability of the state. Step by step, the aristocratic power most indifferent of all to the common good rose to pre-eminence. One of the reasons for the great importance of Gregory's History is that it shows us the first steps of this rise. Such personages as Guntram Boso, Rauching, Ursio, and Berthefred, are the prototypes of the men who ultimately brought down the fabric reared by Charles the Great. The Frankish aristocracy of Gregory's time throughout pursued wholly selfish ends. During all their years of opportunity the notables never did anything constructive ; they never combined to form an assembly on constitutional lines or worked collectively for a just and representative government. From beginning to end they remained consistent to one standard of unpatriotic selfishness. This characteristic persisted through later centuries. The sufferings of France from the incursions of the Northmen in the ninth century were prolonged beyond all measure because the leading men fought only for their own advantage ; theirs was pre-eminently the anarchic class. Gregory was not writing a constitutional history ; it is not unnatural that he should have failed to emphasize the growing opposition between the magnates and the throne which formed the most important movement of his century. It is enough that he provides facts so plainly significant that we can read their meaning for ourselves.

There was no political influence of a free people under the sons and grandsons of Clovis. The settlement of the Franks in Gaul after the conquest brought with it their diffusion over a wide territory. The closely-banded fighting men fell apart into scattered groups, and for the lesser among them the democratic freedom of the tribal warrior came to an end.[1] In the unsettled times of the sixth century the great landholder was the only protector within reach of the man of small estate. The small men were driven to 'recommend' themselves to the big, gaining in safety, but losing in freedom (p. 313). Only the larger proprietors were really free, possessing liberty, property, and jurisdiction. Below them freedom became a relative term, passing by gradation from the state of the man whose liberty was qualified by obligations scarcely infringing his original rights to a state verging upon that of dependence (p. 390 f.). The reader may be specially referred to B. Guérard's analysis of social status under the Franks.[1] Though the lesser freemen had lost much of their original privilege, they did not lose their title, which left them the obligation of bearing arms. The classes below them went to the wars, but apparently not as full combatants (below, p. 225, n. 2); the lesser freemen must, therefore, have borne an arduous part in the frequent wars of the Merovingian kingdoms. If in time of peace they had little power,[2] in time of war, when they came together under arms, they could sometimes make their influence felt. Gregory relates the refusal of the *minor populus* in the army of Childebert II to go on fighting in a vain quarrel (VI. 22 (31)); we see them advancing to the royal tent, and denouncing the false bishop Egidius whom they drove with contumely from the camp.[3] If neither *coloni* nor serfs fought in the ranks, we must infer that the words *minor populus* apply to small freemen from the land, with the addition perhaps of citizen levies from the larger towns.

---

[1] It was inevitable that the old *mallus* or *mal*, the assembly of the free tribe, could not persist in its original form under these conditions of dispersion. It

Thus in the Gaul with which the History is concerned political power and influence upon affairs was confined to the Crown, the aristocracy of landed magnates, and the bishops as leaders of the Church. The kings were more absolute than in

---

survived only for special purposes, to be revived in a modified form under the great Austrasian Mayors of the Palace.

[1] In his classical work *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon* (Paris, 1884), i (*Prolegomena*), pp. 212 ff. This book, often quoted in the present volume, is a mine of erudition to which all subsequent scholars have been indebted. When a new edition was produced by A. Longnon, few additions were necessary, so thorough had been Guérard's work, and so sound his general conclusions.

[2] Sometimes, however, a body of men who must have been freemen took decisive action in time of peace. After Chilperic's death, men of Angers, described as *cives*, refused to accept the count sent to that city by King Guntram (VIII. 18).

[3] In the seventh century, at Kiersi (606), the same element may have been the force which compelled Queen Brunhild to make peace.

later times because the Church and the aristocracy, though soon to combine against the throne, had not yet taken joint action. The future lay with the aristocracy, which possessed the greatest material strength.[1]

b. Civil Administration.

The ministers who carried out the royal instructions were divided into two classes; those attached to the royal household, and those occupying executive positions in the provinces.[2]

The principal household ministers were the Mayor of the Palace, the Count of the Palace, the Referendary, and the Marshal (*comes stabuli*, constable).[3] In the sixth century the office of mayor, though already important, did not yet possess the supreme political significance which it was later destined to attain, when the kings, from active and forcible persons, had become effete and without initiative. It is thought to have originated in that of chief agent of the royal domains;[4] the mayor of the king's household grew in consideration with the growth of royal wealth and power. The mayor exercised authority over all persons in the palace, acted as governor (*nutricius* or *nutritor*) of kings who were minors, and superintended their education. He rose to a position resembling that of a prime minister, sending orders to dukes and counts, influencing their appointment, and dismissing them from their posts. The royal domain was under his supervision, and he could interfere both in judicial and in fiscal matters. In the absence of the king, he presided at the royal tribunal, and acted as commander-in-chief. By the seventh century the mayor was next below the king; in the eighth he was *de facto* head of the state.

---

[1] In these early times there was no hereditary nobility, which was to develop later from the class of high officials, military commanders, and the greater holders of 'benefices'. (Cf. P. Guilhiermoz, *Essai sur l'origine de la noblesse en France au moyen âge.*)

[2] This division was not absolute, some household ministers receiving temporary or permanent offices in the provinces; but it was an essential division and has been noted by Oman in his *Dark Ages* (6th ed., 1923, pp. 123 ff.). The close connexion of high offices of state with the king's household itself marks the autocratic nature of the government. There were always at Court men practised in affairs ready to be dispatched on any special service.

[3] Of these posts, that of referendary was the first to be filled by Gallo-Romans, since it required a higher degree of education than the other offices. But by the end of the sixth century they were eligible for all.

[4] For the office of Mayor of the Palace see Pertz, *Geschichte der Merovingischen Hausmeier*, Hanover, 1819; H. Bonnell, *De dignitate majoris domus regum francorum a Romano sacri cubicularii praeposito ducenda*, Berlin, 1858; G. Schöne, *Die Amtsgewalt der fränkischen majores domus*, Brunswick, 1856; E. Herrmann, *Das Hausmeieramt*, in Gierke's *Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats—und Rechtsgeschichte*, Fasc. ix; Fustel de Coulanges, *Hist.* vol. iii, *La monarchie franque*, ch. ix. Pfister disputes Bonnell's theory as to the origin of the mayor's office (in Lavisse, ii, pt. i, pp. 176–7).

The mayor was at first nominated and dismissed by the king. But, in the cases of Theudebald and Childebert II, the notables made the appointment when the king was a minor; this intervention on their part ultimately became a right.

The Badegisil mentioned by Gregory (VI. 9; VIII. 39; V. M. iv. 35) may be the first recorded mayor. Another mayor whose name is given is Florentianus (IX. 30 and V. M. iv. 6).

The Referendary was the king's secretary. He drafted the royal diplomas and applied the king's seal,[1] acting also as keeper of the archives. The functions of the Count of the Palace were judicial; he attended the king's tribunal, directed the procedure, drew up the reports, and saw to the execution of the sentences. But though these were the proper functions of referendary and count, both on occasion were called upon to perform others; they might be deputed to supervise questions of taxation, or even to do duties which we should regard as belonging to a minister of war. There was no departmental specialism in the Merovingian state; any one enjoying the king's confidence might be detailed for any service,[2] though the count of the stables or marshal appears to have been more strictly confined to his proper work, the supervision of the royal stables.

The high officers in provincial administration were the dukes and counts.[3] The latter, though lower in rank, were responsible for the greater part of the civil government. Dukes were not primarily the administrative chiefs of districts, like counts, though a few districts were permanently governed by men of this rank, who had under them the counts of the cities in their provinces; thus there was a duke of Champagne, set above the counts of Reims, Châlons-sur-Marne, and Soissons.[4] The duke was originally a military leader, appointed to command in a particular campaign, at the end of which he might be left without active employment; his function as governor was rather the exception than the rule, because dukes were usually appointed only to particular frontier regions where it was important to ensure the active co-operation of the local counts at a time of danger. In quiet periods, there was often friction between a governing duke and his counts.[1]

---

[1] In Fustel de Coulanges, as above, pp. 153–4. In V. 3 the referendary Syggo is described as holder of the king's signet-ring (*qui anolum regis Sygiberti tenuerat*). A referendary was often rewarded by a bishopric, obtained for him by the royal influence without much regard for his spiritual qualifications. Diplomas were written on papyrus. An example of the seventh century is described by L. Levillain in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxii (1911), pp. 233 ff.

[2] Pfister, as above, p. 176.

[3] The *comes* of the Roman Empire was identified with the Teutonic *graphio*, *graf*.

[4] In the seventh century there was a duchy of Alsace (which disappeared in the eighth); there was another of the region beyond the Jura (Pfister, as

It should be noted that the title of duke, as borne by the heads of the great tribal confederacies outside of Gaul even when the bearers were nominally under Frankish suzerainty, had a very different meaning. Such dukes were almost independent princes; and in their case the title combined the meanings of chief of the state and of commander-in-chief. The dukes of the Alamanni, Bavarians, or Thuringians were not governors of districts, but rulers of nations.

As the chief administrative officers in the provinces were responsible only to the king, who was generally far away, they were but imperfectly controlled, and apt to become petty tyrants, preying both upon the people and the Church.[2] The names of such men are only too frequent in Gregory: Leudast, count of Tours (V. 47–9), who met his deserts at the hands of the savage Fredegund, Sigivald and Eulalius in Auvergne, Celsus in Provence, Palladius in Javols, Beppolen (VIII. 42) at Rennes and Angers, Nanthinus at Angoulême (V. 36), it is a sad list. *On cherche*, says Professor Pfister, *dans Grégoire de Tours le nom*

---

above, p. 181). In the part of Provence belonging to Austrasia the governor occupied the position of a duke; his exceptional title of *rector* was perhaps borrowed from the Ostrogoths who in the time of the great Theodoric governed this part of Gaul. The title of Patrician, sometimes given to him, was also borne by dukes serving in Burgundy.

[1] Ennodius, duke of Touraine and Poitou, was so unpopular that the counts of Tours and Poitiers petitioned King Childebert for his removal. He was transferred elsewhere, but after a time was deprived of his office: 'receiving his leisure, he went home and occupied himself with his private affairs' (IX. 7). In the History, violent or treacherous dukes, like Rauching, Beppolen, or Desiderius were the rule, honourable and loyal men, like Lupus, the exception.

[2] Only a service of officers, like the *missi dominici* of Charles the Great, sent out to inspect and report upon local conditions, could have brought order into this misgovernment. It is true that the kings did occasionally send commissioners to deal with particular cases, and that the mission of Ansovald sent by Chilperic to report on the misdeeds of Leudast at Tours had some effect (V. 47), as had that of another commissioner sent by the same king to investigate the revolt at Limoges. But these isolated acts of intervention were very different from a systematic control.

d'un comte honnête, on ne le trouve point. The testimonials of the courtly Fortunatus have no certain value as evidence to the contrary; his poetic vision seems too often even in known cases to have seen black things as white. Such being the character of the counts, it does not surprise us that important persons living in the provinces managed to get themselves placed under the direct government of the distant king in order to be free from all interference on the part of his ever-present count.[1] When we read the doings of these local tyrants we well understand the advisability of such a course, for even the worst kings had less opportunity than their counts for continual persecution of their neighbours.

The unit administered by the count was, in the north-eastern or more purely Teutonic part of Gaul, the *pagus* or tribal district; in the other parts, where Gallo-Roman tradition survived, the *civitas*; but as the *civitas* itself frequently represented a more ancient Gaulish tribal district, the principle of division was originally much the same. The old *civitates* were sometimes divided, and the arbitrary partitions of the country among the kings, or their desire to find places for functionaries, led to the increase of administrative districts.[2] This increase chiefly took place in the north, where *pagi* were more numerous than the old Roman cities; in the Gallo-Roman country, south of a line drawn from Lyon to Mont St. Michel, there was no such addition to the number. The Merovingian count is often referred to simply as *judex*, because his chief function in time of peace was judicial.[3] The *formula* used in investing him with office has been preserved: he is to judge the several nationalities in his district according to their own laws; to punish evildoers; to defend the widow and the orphan; and to see that the Crown receives its revenue.[4] Counts were chosen from all classes, and Gallo-Romans, as might be expected, through their superior education or knowledge of administrative tradition, were in the majority even in the sixth century; of the names known to us, about three-quarters are Gallo-Roman.[1] This arrangement was naturally displeasing to the Frankish aristocracy, which in 614, after the death of Queen Brunhild, took steps to have it modified.[2] The count was not paid a salary, but was given the revenue of certain royal *villae* assigned for his remuneration, and, in addition, one-third of the fines which he inflicted, a thoroughly vicious arrangement. When going on circuit through his district, he and his suite were maintained at the expense of the inhabitants. Such arrangements were open to the worst abuses, and were in fact freely exploited. The count had to organize the public services, and to enforce the payment of taxes, the annual surplus from which he brought in person to the royal treasury.[3] Finally, in case of war, it devolved upon him to summon and lead the free men of his district during the campaign.

---

[1] This was one of the contributory causes to the ultimate development of feudalism (Pfister, as above, p. 183).

[2] Pfister, as above, p. 179. For the *pagus* see also Fustel de Coulanges, as above, pp. 194–5.

[3] The count had as assessors in his court, prominent inhabitants (*rachimburgi, boni homines*). The court was known as *mallus* or *placitum* (p. 211). For a brief account of his office and powers see also A. Marignan, as above, pp. 64 ff.

[4] Unfortunately for the people, it was the last of these duties to which the count devoted his chief attention.

The count's chief subordinates were the *vicarii*, who were responsible for justice and order in the secondary towns of the *civitas*, and probably in the chief city during his absence. Below the *vicarii* came the *tribuni*, who may have been equivalent to *centeniers* (hundred-men), leading the local associations for the preservation of public order in the country, and seeing that law was obeyed in small places.[4] The office of *tribunus* seems to have been a recognized step in official hierarchy, after holding which a man might rise to be a *vicarius* or even a count;[5] the count's personal guards bore this rank.

---

[1] G. Kurth, 'De la nationalité des comtes francs,' in *Mélanges Paul Fabre*, Paris, 1902.

[2] It was decreed in 615 that the count must be chosen from the landed proprietors of the district. This was a serious blow to royal influence.

[3] So Count Macco of Poitiers goes to pay Childebert II the revenue from his district: *ut debitum fisco servitium solite deberet inferre* (X. 21).

[4] The *centenarius* was originally the spokesman of a hundred hearths, the heads of the families in the group being collectively responsible for breaches of the law by any other members.

[5] Tribunes are mentioned more than once in the History (e. g. VII. 23 and note to X. 21). In G. C. 40 we read of Nunnius, a tribune, who sacrilegiously cut off a part of the tomb of S. Germanus at Autun. For the tribunes of Merovingian times cf. C. Lécrivain in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 1889, p. 375.

c. *Law and Justice.*[1]

The reader of the History may often wonder whether it is worth while to speak of justice at all in connexion with the Merovingian kingdoms, so flagrant was the lawlessness, so cheaply might the worst criminal who had the means compound for his offence. The suspicion goes too far, but a few instances will show that the doubt is not unreasonable. We find whole cities, groups of citizens, and individuals, all in turn taking the law into their own hands.

In 584, after the death of Chilperic, the citizens of Orleans and Blois joined in an invasion of the territory of Chartres; on their return the people of Chartres retaliated with the same ferocity. There was no local power strong enough to stop this lawlessness; all the counts of the several districts could do was to arrange compositions (VII. 2). At Tours a regular vendetta between two families and their respective supporters was only settled after long dispute by the intervention of the Church (VII. 47), which made itself responsible for some of the wergild in order to secure peace in the city. Another horrible brawl of the same kind broke out in church, before the very altar of S. Denis, and was settled by the bishop, Ragnemod, successor of Germanus in the see of Paris, who allowed the participants, all of high birth, to escape excommunication on payment of the appointed composition or wergild (V. 32). When punishment did fall upon the heads of such disturbers of the peace, it was sometimes more like 'Jeddart justice' than the execution of a legal sentence. Queen Fredegund dealt with a vendetta, similar to that of Tours, after her own fashion. Inviting the parties to a banquet, she posted men with axes behind the chief parties to the quarrel. At a given signal their skulls were cloven in half.[2]

---

[1] The persons who administered the law have been enumerated in the preceding section.

[2] X. 27. All the kings, even the best among them, by exercise of their arbitrary power contributed to the general cheapening of human life. Guntram himself, when he yielded to passion, or to the suspicion born of fear, was guilty of the most violent actions. Childebert II, though not habitually cruel, set no better example. As for Chilperic and some of the earlier kings, especially Lothar I, they appear to have been quite indifferent to bloodshed, and to have taken a positive pleasure in inflicting torture.

Individual acts of lawless savagery related by Gregory are very numerous; and the perpetrators often enjoyed royal favour or protection. The kings were not scrupulous in the prosecution of their own vengeance; and their friends or dependents, who followed their example, counted on their protection. The abbot Lupentius had incurred the enmity of Innocentius, count of Javols. As the result of a false charge the abbot was summoned to court by Brunhild. But as he was returning home, after his acquittal, the count twice fell upon him: on the first occasion maltreating him, on the second doing him to death. He cut off the abbot's head which he placed in a bag full of stones and flung into a river; the trunk, tied to a larger stone, was similarly treated (VI. 37).[1] Nothing is said of any punishment inflicted on the count. On the contrary, through Brunhild's support, he was elected bishop of Rodez, where his actions were in accord with those of his secular career (VI. 38). Bobolen, referendary of Queen Fredegund, seized a vineyard belonging to a lady named Domnola. When she entered it to assert her right, he attacked her and her company with an armed band. She was killed, with some of those attending her, the murderer taking final possession of the land apparently without interference from the representatives of the law (VIII. 32). One Vedast was killed by a man in the retinue of a powerful Saxon named Childeric (VII. 3). No reprisals followed, because the Saxon compounded with the sons of the dead man.[2] Chuppa, formerly marshal to Chilperic, crossed the border into Childebert's territory, and began driving off cattle (X. 5). The people rose and recovered their property, killing two of his men; two others were sent bound to Childebert, who ordered an inquiry into Chuppa's escape. The prisoners ascribed it to the connivance of the vicarius Animodius. He too was brought to court, and acquitted; but it is significant that a preliminary to his dismissal was a bribe to Flavianus, a 'domestic'.[3] Chuppa afterwards attempted to carry off the daughter of Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans, from the estate of Mareuil. He appeared at night with a gang of followers; but the girl's mother, Magnatrude, was equal to the occasion, leading her men, and driving him off with loss. One Syrivald was butchered in his country house by an armed gang led by the son of Ageric, the newly elected bishop of Verdun, the motive being revenge for previous ill-treatment of Ageric (III. 35).[1] Parthenius, the hated finance minister of Theudebert, had to seek episcopal protection at Trèves as soon as that king was dead. He was placed in a chest in the church with a number of objects spread over him, but was discovered by the furious mob, dragged out, and stoned to death (III. 36). A poem by Fortunatus (*Carm.* iv. 15) is an epitaph of Bobolen, a deacon, whose head was cleft with an axe by an assassin while he slept.

---

[1] The remains were brought to the bank, the head by the miraculous intervention of an eagle, and buried by peasants.

[2] *Composuit tamen filiis Saxo ille mortem eius.*

[3] *Datis tamen Flaviano domestico [illegible].* For the domestici cf. [illegible]

Such being the usage to which Franks and Gallo-Romans were exposed, it was only to be expected that persons of foreign race would be treated with little pretence of justice if they fell into the hands of the powerful. A Jew, Armentarius, with his associates, Jewish and Christian, had lent money to Injuriosus, a former *vicarius* (VII. 23). This personage, pretending that he meant to settle the debt, invited them all to a feast, at the end of which they were killed and thrown into a well. The only result of a trial held after recovery of the bodies was an injunction that Injuriosus should clear himself by oath, no one having dared to bring evidence against him. The matter was subsequently carried into the king's court, but no one appeared against the defendant, who was of course acquitted.

But though law was impotent in the case of those who could disregard it with impunity, it was not a dead letter for the ordinary man. Its administration was, however, complicated by the coexistence of distinct races, each living under its own law; for the conquerors did not attempt to bring the whole country under a single code. Even among the Franks there was not a single system, the Salians and Ripuarians each having their own, though only the Salian was at this time committed to writing:[2] the Burgundians had also their own law.[1] As for the Gallo-Romans, they were allowed to remain under Roman law.[2] If we glance for a moment beyond the political boundaries of the Frankish kingdoms we find the Visigoths in Septimania still judged by the Visigothic law, committed to writing as early as the reign of Euric (466–485).[3] The Alamanni had a customary law of their own; so had the Bavarians and the Saxons, though none of these were written down as early as the sixth century.[4] The confusion arising

---

[1] Ageric himself was a merciful and kindly man who paid dearly for sheltering men in danger of their lives (IX. 12).

[2] The Laws of the Barbarians (cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 38; Fustel de Coulanges, as above, iii. pp. 304 ff.; S. Dill, as above, Bk. i, ch. 2) were all written down in Latin and are best studied in the series of the M. G. H. entitled *Leges* (*Legum Sectio*, i, ii., &c.); the laws of the different tribes are edited by various scholars—those of the Ripuarians by R. Sohm, those of the

---

Burgundians by Bluhme, those of the Frisians by Richthofen, &c. Editions of the Salic law are: J. M. Pardessus, *La loi Salique*, 1843; J. H. Hessels, *Lex Salica*, 1880; J. F. Behrend, *Lex Salica*, 1874; A. Holder, *Lex Salica emendata*, 1880; P. Viollet, *Hist. du droit civil franç.*, 2nd ed., 1893; H. Geffcken, *Lex Salica*, 1898. Cf. also G. Kurth, *Études franques*, 1919, i, p. 97; B. Krusch, in *Neues Archiv der Gesellsch. für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, xl (1917), pp. 498–580, and in *Nachrichten von der K. Gesellsch. der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 1916, pp. 589–714. Krusch condemns the theories of M. Krammer, and is supported by L. Levillain in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxxi (1920), pp. 320 ff., who agrees that the old theory with regard to the Salic law must be retained, viz. that it was first written down in the time of Clovis, when its sixty-five clauses show no traces of Christian influence; that it received additions after the baptism of Clovis; that other additions were made by that king's sons, embodying Christian ideas; and that revision continued down to the time of Charles the Great, the code finally containing ninety-nine articles. The Salic law was primarily a penal system with some civil law enactments; but by admitting customs from Roman law, ecclesiastical law, and other Teutonic laws it gradually assumed a territorial character.

The Ripuarian law, that of the Franks between the Meuse and Rhine, is not represented by any MS. earlier than Charles the Great, though it was compiled in the time of Dagobert (629–39). It diverges more widely from old Germanic custom than the Salic law, from which, however, it borrows much.

[1] The Burgundian law was compiled by Gundobad about 500, just after his defeat by Clovis; it was known as the *Liber Constitutionum*, *Lex Gundobada*, or *Lex Gombata*. It shows strong traces of Roman influence, but sanctioned trial by battle; it was still in use in the ninth century. For the use of Romans in his dominions Gundobad compiled the *Lex Romana Burgundionum*, sometimes called the *Liber Papiani*.

[2] Clerics were judged by Roman law in so far as they were amenable to civil jurisdiction. Their conduct was regulated by the canons of Gallican Church councils. Gallo-Romans and clergy may have studied the great legislative works produced by the jurisconsults of Justinian, the Pandects, the Code, and the Institutes, though the works were better known in Italy.

[3] Euric's Law remained in force till Leovigild (568–86) renewed it. After Leovigild, new laws were made, applicable to all Visigothic subjects, and Recceswinth (649–72) issued a code to be enforced throughout his whole territory, the law thus becoming territorial. The Romans in Visigothic dominions were first judged by the Roman Law compiled under Alaric II, son of Euric, and known as the *Breviarium Alarici*.

[4] The compilation of the laws of these peoples was made between the seventh and ninth centuries. Books on Germanic law are: P. Canciani, *Barbarorum leges antiquae*, Venice, 1781–9; F. Walter, *Corpus iuris germanici antiqui*, Berlin, 1824; H. M. Zöpfl, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, 4th ed., Heidelberg, 1871–6; J. E. O. Stobbe, *Geschichte der deutschen Rechtsquellen*, Brunswick, 1860–4. More recent is H. Brunner's *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, 2nd ed.,

from this multiplicity of laws was, however, less serious than might be supposed. The barbaric systems, written or unwritten, had a general resemblance, varying in degree of punishment for certain defined acts, rather than in principle. All were examples of old Germanic customary law, personal and not territorial, largely concerned with the imposition of fines, and containing few rules of civil law ; even when written they were not regular codes, for the different heads were not co-ordinated. Together they may be said to have formed a single group, standing over against a legal system different in origin and principle—the system of imperial Rome.

The disparity between the penalties sharply marks the unequal position accorded to the various sections of the population. Among the Ripuarians, the *wergeld* for killing an *antrustion* (p. 386) was six hundred gold *sols* ; that for the murder of a free Frank, two hundred ; that for slaying a Teuton of another tribe, a hundred and sixty *sols* ; that for the murder of an ordinary Gallo-Roman one hundred *sols*. But if the slain Gallo-Roman happened to belong to any of the higher orders in the Church, he cost his murderer much more than a free Frank. Even a subdeacon cost four hundred *sols* ; the slaying of a priest involved a payment of six hundred, or as much as the sum due for the murder of one of the king's companions. The penalty for killing a bishop amounted to half as much again, no less than nine hundred *sous*, sufficient evidence of the awe with which the person of a bishop was surrounded. These penalties might be paid either in money or in kind, the units of the different kinds being valued according to a regular scale. Thus an ox might be equivalent to two *sols*, a cow to one, a horse to six, a long sword in its sheath to seven, a good shirt of mail to twelve, a helmet to six, &c.[1] The appointed rate of composition

---

Leipsic, 1906. A general summary by C. Pfister will be found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last ed., s. v. *Germanic Laws, Early*. The *Formulae* of the monk Marculf, though compiled in the middle of the seventh century, are of great value in relation to the civil status of individuals in earlier times ; they are edited by K. Zeumer, M. G. H. *Legum sect.* v. Hanover 1886. For Marculf see the bibliography given by U. Chevalier, *Rép. des sources hist. du moyen âge*, *Bio-bibliogr.*, s. v. Marculphe.

[1] On such a scale, a bishop's life was worth a large herd of four hundred and fifty oxen, or a hundred and fifty horses, or an equal number of helmets, or seventy-five mail shirts. An ordinary free Gallo-Roman cost fifty oxen. Cf. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, p. 18. Martin draws attention to the high value set upon defensive armour, which was only worn by warriors of rank (cf. p. 232, below).

was high enough to act as a strong deterrent to the murder of free men. But sometimes, when bad blood was engendered, Franks of birth and position became reckless of consequences, pecuniary or other. The above-mentioned vendettas at Tours and Paris were only settled after negotiations had more than once been broken off, and, in one case, the greater part of the composition paid by the Church (p. 204). With regard to property, Teutonic law was terribly severe. As late as the time of Charles the Great, a more merciful ruler than his predecessors, the punishment for a first theft was still the putting out of an eye, for a second the loss of the nose, for a third, death.

We may note examples of two provisions especially characteristic of Germanic law: the opportunity given to an accused person of clearing himself by oath, either his own unsupported oath, or that of a number of supporters in addition to his own; and ordeal, the most conspicuous example of which was trial by battle, a test which might be vicariously undergone.

In the absence of proof Frankish law admitted the abandonment of the issue to divine judgement, permitting a man to clear himself by oath.[1] After the time of Clovis, when the nation had become Christian, such oaths were now taken before the tombs of saints; a link was thus formed between Frankish and ecclesiastical law, the latter also recognizing the supernatural verdict (cf. p. 306). But an element of paganism still clung about ordeal, especially that by battle, although this method of establishing innocence was recognized by Christians long after Merovingian times.[2] A very interesting example is recorded in the History (X. 11), and none perhaps better illustrates the futility of such expedients. When King Guntram was hunting in the Vosges, he came upon the remains of a newly-slain wild ox. The ranger (*custos silvae*), severely questioned as to who had presumed to hunt in the royal preserve, named Chundo as the culprit. Chundo, the king's chamberlain, and an old and trusted servant, was sent in bonds to Chalon-sur-Saône, whither the king came to investigate the case. Both the accused and the ranger protesting innocence, Guntram ordained trial by battle. Chundo was vicariously represented by his nephew, a mere boy; the forester maintained his own cause. In the result, both combatants were killed, and nothing was proved by the butchery. But as Chundo himself sought to take sanctuary, Guntram assumed his guilt; he was seized before he could enter the church of S. Marcellus, bound to a stake, and stoned to death.[1]

---

[1] For the single oath, and the ' combined oath ' (by ' compurgation '), cf. Fustel de Coulanges, as above, iii, pp. 426 ff., C. Galy, *La famille à l'époque Mérov.*, pp. 244 ff.; S. Dill, as above, pp. 58–60.

[2] For ordeal and trial by battle cf. de Coulanges, pp. 454 ff., Dill, pp. 57 ff.

The opposition in principle between Roman and Frankish law had various political consequences. Before the Roman law men were theoretically equal; Germanic jurisdiction directly favoured the Frankish aristocracy by more carefully protecting their persons, and by sparing them the capital sentence for crimes of violence, unless these were committed against the king. They thus formed a privileged group, tending, in Austrasia at least, to form a political party dangerous to the Crown (p. 192). For this reason we find the Crown seeking to alter Frankish law by introducing Roman principles and sanctions. Could the law be fully Romanized, the position of the throne would be made much stronger, and that of the aristocracy in proportion weakened[2] In Gregory's time the monarchy made no permanent advance in this direction. In Burgundy, though there was a certain antagonism between the Crown and the aristocracy, the old Burgundian law was undisturbed. In Neustria the Gallo-Romans were strong, but the king did not take advantage of the fact. It was in Austrasia that the opposition of the notables was most pronounced, and provoked a strong reaction from the politically-minded Brunhild, her consort Sigibert, and her son Childebert. In Austrasia the Franks were not, as elsewhere, insensibly affected by the Gallo-Roman habit of obedience to government; on the contrary, their chief men never forgot the independent spirit of Teutonic fighting men, who regarded themselves more as the equals than the servants of their king. Brunhild, who had considered schemes for taxing the free Franks like the Gallo-Romans, probably instigated her son, just before his death, to adopt measures for modifying or superseding the Teutonic system of compounding for crime by money payment.[1] After Childebert's death the troubled times were unfavourable to any such changes, and when the queen herself died all present prospect of increasing monarchic power at the expense of the aristocracy faded out. The subsequent period down to the time of Charles the Great was all in favour of the old Teutonic law. The seventh and eighth centuries were a period of unceasing war; the monarchy and its upholders had constant need of the fighting leaders on whom the military efficiency of the state so much depended. In 688 Pepin of Héristal maintained the old law in all its details; the Neustrian Mayor of the Palace, Ebroin, fought for Roman methods, but was finally defeated.

---

[1] When Guntram recovered from his fury, he bitterly repented his hasty action, and often mourned the loss for so trifling a cause of a loyal subject bound to him by ties of intimate association.

As time went on, the custom of trial by battle became rather more than less frequent, and in 803 Charles the Great added trial by fire, in which the accused had to walk over burning brands. In 793, Peter, bishop of Verdun, cleared himself of complicity in a plot by the success of a retainer in some physical test, perhaps that of battle (Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, p. 322).

[2] We have seen that in Austrasia, the Frankish aristocracy was more aggressive than in the other kingdoms, and it was precisely here that the law allowed them the greatest privilege.

The highest court of justice in a Frankish kingdom was the king's court, which sat at the palace, usually one of the royal 'villas', the judgements being given at various domains.[2] The king was usually represented by the count of the palace, sitting with high functionaries and bishops as assessors. This court alone was competent to try those of high rank or holding important positions, the officers of the palace, dukes, counts, *domestici* (vol. ii, p. 516), and all persons under the special protection of the king. Fiscal cases and cases of *lèse-majesté*[3] could only be tried in this court; appeals from the count's court were brought before it. It had other functions such as the manumission of slaves 'by the denier'.[4] In order to settle questions with the minimum of delay, the kings would sometimes make a progress, during which complaints were brought before them.

The count's court, called by the Gallo-Romans *placitum*, by the Franks *mal* (*mallum, mallus*), had in the provinces powers similar to those of the king's tribunal. The count could inflict

[1] Bouquet, *Rec. des hist. des Gaules et de la France*, iv, p. 111; Baluze, *Capitulaires*, &c., i, p. 17.

[2] Compiègne, Valenciennes, Quierzy in the arrondissement of Laon, Saint-Cloud, Luzarches, Ponthion in the Department of the Marne, Quernes in the Pas-de-Calais (Pfister, as above, p. 185).

[3] Cases of *lèse majesté* (*laesae maiestatis*) are recorded in V. 18 (25) and VIII. 44. This offence was derived from Roman law.

[4] The king's court also confirmed sales and donations of property (Pfister, in C. M. H. ii, p. 186).

the death sentence without trial on a person who had been caught *in flagrante delicto*, and during his perambulation of his *pagus* could deal with many cases in summary fashion. But in the ordinary course he sat at fixed periods in his tribunal in the capital of the *pagus*, which was also the bishop's city.[1]

In his absence, the count could be represented by a *vicarius* ; an officer of this rank also represented him in the smaller towns of his district ; in yet smaller places the *centenier* heard minor cases, and in hamlets the *decanus*. In process of time the county was regularly subdivided into vicariates, and the office of the *centenier* was merged in that of the *vicarius*.[2] The *centenier*, as his name suggests, was originally a ' hundred-man ', responsible for law and order in a group of a hundred families ; he had his own small assembly or *mallus* over which he presided.[3] Both the count and his ' vicars ' had assessors, known as *rachimburgi* or *boni homines*, appointed for each occasion. They were local notables, among whom priests were reckoned, seven forming a quorum. Their knowledge of their districts was of service to the count, who frequently came from another part of the kingdom, but in the sixth century they were not bound to know much law.[4]

The reputation of the counts was not a good one, and the History records all too many examples of their violence and injustice. Under some brutal holders of the office, the count's court must have been a place of terror. Such was the case with that of Leudast, count of Tours. This man, sitting in judgement with the principal laymen and clergy of the place, was infuriated when he saw any one endeavouring to promote justice. He violently abused the citizens, had priests dragged out in manacles, and others beaten.[5] Albinus, count of

---

[1] In Italy under Theodoric, in a case between a Goth and a Roman, the count was instructed to take a Roman of sound judgement (*adhibere sibi prudentem Romanum*) as assessor (Cassiodorus, *Var.* vii. 3). This was the obvious thing to do, and such must have been the practice of those Frankish counts who desired equal justice.

[2] Pfister, in C. M. H. ii, p. 137.

[3] In the Teutonic dialect he was known as *thunginus*, or ' he who compels '.

[4] Fustel de Coulanges, as above, pp. 362 ff. In Carolingian times it was found advisable to restrict the powers of the *vicarius* ; a capitulary of 810 forbade him to judge cases affecting liberty or property except in the presence of a superior. Charles the Great improved the conduct of judicial business by introducing trained officials, *scabini* (échevins), to take the place of the *rachimburgi*.

[5] V. 48 : *Iam si in iudicio cum senioribus vel laicis vel clericis resedisset, et vidisset hominem iustitiam prosequentem, protinus agebatur in furias, ructabat convicia in civibus ; presbiteros manicis iubebat extrahi, milites fustibus verberari. . . .*

Marseilles, seized an archdeacon in church, though vested in his alb and taking part in the service. Not only so, he dragged him off to prison, striking and kicking him as he went.[1] The count and his representatives were often suspected of defeating the ends of justice to further their own. Animodus, *vicarius* of Tours, described as the judicial authority throughout the region,[2] was suspected of conniving at the escape of Chuppa, Chilperic's former count of the stables, or marshal. He was acquitted ; but many charges of the kind were doubtless justified. The functions of court officers and police were perhaps exercised by the *tribuni*, who acted as bodyguards of the counts, and by men of lower grade. On one occasion ' the king's men ' are mentioned, the reference being perhaps to the count's subordinates. When Leudast, after ceasing to be count of Tours, took refuge in the Austrasian territory of Bourges, he had to continue his flight, because the *regales pueri* were upon his heels (V. 49).

Savigny[3] endeavoured to show that in the sixth century Roman municipal rights survived, partly basing his argument on the case of blood feud recorded by Gregory in which residents of Tours were implicated (VII. 47 ; IX. 19), and a *judicium civium* is mentioned. But in VII. 47 the parties were all Franks, and their case was tried by Frankish law.

Sentence of death was naturally frequent in such an age, and was often arbitrarily decreed by the kings. The old Frankish method of summary punishment by cleaving the skull with the war-axe had not passed out of memory, or even out of use. Guntram, in an hour of pessimism, spoke of it in a threatening manner to the leaders of his disgraced army, just as the envoys of his nephew Childebert had spoken of it even to himself (VII. 14).[4] Magnovald, for serious offences, was killed by this means in the royal palace at Metz. He was summoned to court, and allowed to join the spectators of a beast-baiting by dogs. The person appointed to do the deed waited till his attention was engaged in the sport and cleft his skull with his axe.[1] Sometimes the chosen instrument of justice was the sword. Duke Rauching, the detected leader of a plot against Childebert's life and Guntram's interests, was cunningly thwarted by the young king in the very room in the palace where he had himself intended to cut down his master. As he left the chamber, prevented by the king's precautions from affecting his purpose, he was suddenly seized by the feet, and flung down in such a way that his legs remained inside while his head and shoulders were without. Guards standing ready hacked his head with swords until it lost the likeness of humanity; the body was then stripped and flung naked from the window (IX. 9). King Guntram ordered a certain Boantus, whom he had long suspected of disloyalty, to be put to the sword; the king's men slew him in his own house, and his goods were confiscated (VIII. 11). The spear or lance also on occasion served the purposes of justice. Guntram Boso, driven by the flames from the bishop's house in which he had taken shelter, was pierced by so many spears that their shafts, projecting on all sides, prevented his body from falling to the ground (IX. 10). The most cruel deaths were those which were deliberately protracted. Gailen, the faithful servant of Merovech, who had obeyed his master's orders and stabbed him that he might not fall into his father's power again, was treated with savage cruelty; his hands, feet, ears, and nose were cut off,[2] and before he was killed he was subjected to many tortures. Another man, Grindio, was inserted in the spokes of a wheel and suspended (V. 12 (18)).

---

[1] IV. 43 : *Nec mora, Albinus de sede exiliens, ad prehensum archidiaconum detrahit, pugnis calcibusque caedit, et custodia carcerali coartat.* Nothing is said of any rebuke administered by authority to the count for this high-handed proceeding.

[2] X. 5 : *qui pagum illum iudiciaria regebat potestate.*

[3] *Geschichte des römischen Rechts*, 1st ed., i, p. 268. Savigny notes that the public reading of the will of Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, was done in the Roman fashion (V. P. 8, 5) ; the will was read by the judge ' in the forum ', the people standing round. Here there certainly seems to be a survival ; but not full of municipal government. For the *curia* see above, p. 159, n. 2.

[4] VIII. 30 : *Certe, si vos regalia iussa contempnetis et ea quae praecipio implere differtis, iam debet securis capiti vestro submergi.*

The gibbet (*patibulum* or *furca*) often awaited the detected thief, or the criminal.[3] In the 'Miracles of S. Martin' Gregory relates that a thief was left suspended to a post (*stipes*), which was blown down by a wind raised by the saint.[4] A malefactor suspended in chains fell to the ground and was hung up once more; but by the power of S. Martin the intercession of an abbot with the count was successful.[1] We learn that in a similar way the *virtus* of the recluse Eparchius enabled a thief, left hanging from a gibbet, to hold out until he was taken down alive.[2] Drowning was another means of inflicting death: we read of certain women accused of adultery who were thrown into the Rhône and Saône with mill-stones tied about their necks (G. M. 69).

---

[1] VIII. 36: *librata secure caput eius inlisit.*

[2] Such punishments were recognized in the barbaric laws, where a money composition could be paid as an alternative. Thus in the Salic law a slave who struck a free woman or pulled out her hair must pay five *solidi* or lose a hand (*tit.* 76, § 3). Brutal acts of violence like cutting off limbs, fingers, &c., were punished by a graduated scale of fines ranging from thirty-five to a hundred *solidi* (*Lex Sal.*, *tit.* 29).

[3] In the Salic law *furca* is the term used. Fines were inflicted on any one taking down a malefactor *de furca* (*Lex Sal.*, *tit.* 67, 68).

[4] V. M. iv. 53.

Though composition-fines might usually be paid for the lawless acts of the free Franks, when they were paid for at all, it sometimes befell that these would no longer serve, and even they were exposed to the tortures which were the frequent lot of the unfree. Torture was a recognized means of obtaining a confession, as well as a deterrent for offences not punished with death. Men were stretched by rope and pulley (*ad trochleas*),[3] flogged, and tortured on the wheel.[4] It was in accord with the savage old tradition of pagan Teutonic tribes, sometimes recalled by the men of later times. King Theuderic, inciting his Ripuarians against the Thuringians, accused the latter of having in a past war hung Frankish boys to trees by the sinews of the thigh, and torn Frankish girls asunder by tying them to horses afterwards driven in contrary directions (III. 7). But horrible as these cruelties were, they were almost matched by the very persons who complained of them, by their relatives and their contemporaries. A few examples will illustrate the savagery of the age.

The torture of the ex-Count Leudast was deliberately protracted (VI. 23 (32)). Riculf, a subdeacon, for complicity in his plot, was sentenced to death. His life being spared through Gregory's intercession, the wretched man was so brutally mishandled 'that no substance, were it even metal, might bear such blows as this wretch had to suffer'. He was suspended from a tree with his hands tied behind him from the third hour of the day. At the ninth hour he was taken down, racked, bludgeoned, and thrashed with sticks and double thongs, those who applied the blows being not one or two persons, but anybody and everybody who could get in a blow. He at last made a clean breast of the whole plot; and a brave man he must have been not to have done so before.[1]

---

[1] *Ibid*: *cum adpensus fuisset disruptis vinculis inlaesus ad terram ruit.*

[2] G. C. 98: *patibulo adpensus relictus est.* Cf. also H. F. vi. 8; he had been first racked and flogged. A Frank landowner threatens his escaped slave and his accomplice with the gibbet if they are caught (III. 15). To take a man down from the gibbet alive was a punishable offence (*Lex. Sal., tit.* 68: *Si quis hominem vivum de furca tollere aut demittere presumpserit . . .*).

[3] V. *49* (see note); G. M. 81; *ad trochleas extendi et fortiter caedi.* For tortures see G. Verdène, *La torture, les supplices et les peines corporelles . . . dans la justice allemande*, Paris, 1906. Cf. also J. Döpler, *Theatrum poenarum, suppliciorum et executionum criminalium* Sondershausen, 1693, from which book we are reminded how late barbaric torture persisted.

[4] The wheel was considered the worst form of torture. A slave committing adultery with his mistress is condemned by the Salic law (tit. 70. § 2) to this worst of all punishments: *Servus ille pessima poena ponatur, hoc est ut in rota mittatur.*

Horrible torture was inflicted on those believed guilty of witchcraft. There was an official of Chilperic's court, named Mummolus, against whom the queen had an old grudge. He was incautious enough to tell a courtier-guest who was lamenting the death by dysentery of a boy dear to him, that he always kept by him a herb powerful enough to cure dysentery at its worst;[2] Fredegund's young son had quite recently been carried off by this very disease. The courtier told her what he had heard, thereby rousing her to increased fury against the man who might have cured her son, but did not. She seized and tortured certain women of Paris until they confessed themselves witches and declared that they had been the cause of many deaths, adding the following words, fatal to the official: 'We gave the life of thy son, O queen, for that of Mummolus.' Then the queen inflicted yet more grievous tortures; some she killed with the sword, others she burned; the bones of others were broken, their limbs being inserted in the spokes of wheels. Mummolus himself was put in chains and tortured, then hanged from a beam with hands bound behind his back, and interrogated. At last he confessed that he had obtained unctions and potions from these women wherewith to win the royal favour, but foolishly sent the king a message that he had taken no harm. Chilperic cried: 'Verily this man must be a witch.' The wretched prefect was then beaten with triple thongs, and stretched by the pulleys till the executioners themselves were wearied. He was subjected to further agony, when Fredegund allowed him his life, perhaps because to live was at this stage worse than to suffer death. Septimana, a nurse of the Austrasian royal house, was subjected to torture for complicity in a plot against the Austrasian queen Faileuba, the queen-mother Brunhild, and King Childebert II, her son. With her male accomplice, Dructulf, she was hoisted and severely flogged until she confessed. Later she was branded on the face before being sent to hard labour in a mill (IX. 38).[1]

---

[1] V. 49. This can hardly have been done without the knowledge of the bishops, before whose council the plot of Leudast was exposed.

[2] VI. 25 (35).

Sunnegisel, accused of conspiring against Childebert's life, was mercilessly tortured. He was flogged every day with sticks and thongs; even when his wounds festered, the punishment was continued (X. 19). Even envoys, whose persons were by custom sacrosanct, were not always free from risk of torture. Those sent to Guntram by the pretender Gundovald were racked by order of that pious king, though they carried the *virgae consecratae* supposed to ensure the immunity usually granted to ambassadors.[2] They were then thrust into prison.

Imprisonment was a universal form of punishment, often mentioned by Gregory, usually when he is relating the efforts of holy men, by personal intervention if they lived, through their apparitions or their remains if they had passed from this life, to set the captives free (cf. p. 309). There must have been jails and lock-ups in all the towns and townships of Gaul under the charge of the count's subordinates, and in one or two passages Gregory gives a few details as to their nature. In one case we are told that the wooden roof of the prison was weighted with large stones and its doors locked and barred. Inside, the prisoners sat in chains with their feet in stocks; but the *virtus* of S. Martin was strong enough to set them free.[3] Stocks or a similar instrument were used both within and outside prisons.[1] Men unable to pay their taxes were cast into prison, where they were kept bound with their feet in stocks.[2] Debtors were imprisoned until able to pay.[3] Imprisonment was inflicted on mere suspicion of carelessness, as when Guntram put three suspected men in chains because his hunting horn had been lost.[4]

---

[1] In connexion with the burning of persons implicated in this affair, we may recall the burning of the notorious M^{me} Voisin at Paris in 1680, mentioned by Voltaire (*Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. 26), and by M^{me} de Sévigné (letter to her daughter, 6 March 1680).

[2] VII. 32: *iussit eos ad trochleas extendi*. After the intensification of this torture (*increscentibus suppliciis*), the envoys made an important confession. Guntram would perhaps have defended his action on the ground that Gundovald was an impostor who had no right to send envoys at all, and that men who served him in this capacity did so at their own risk.

[3] *Erat enim huiusmodi carcer ut super struem tignorum axes validi superpositi pulpitarentur, ac desuper, qui eosdem obpremerent, insignes fuerant lapides collocati. Nihil minus et ostium carceris sera ferro munita, obducto clave pessulo obserabatur* (V. S. M. v. 26). S. Martin by his power *disiecit pulpita, catenas confregit et trabem quae vinctorum coartabat pedes aperuit.*

Prisoners were transferred from one place to another in chains, generally on foot[5] but occasionally on horseback (V. M. v. 35).

d. Revenue and Commerce; Currency.

The expenses of an early Merovingian kingdom under any competent management would have been less than its revenue. Its very injustice made for cheapness. There was no standing army; when large forces were needed they were raised by the royal *ban* for a particular campaign and commonly dismissed when winter came; a regular commissariat was unnecessary, since they lived on the country; weapons and missiles cost the state nothing, since the soldier provided his own. The expense of administering justice must have been covered by the yield of the elaborate system of fines; and the salaries of judges[6] were paid from the profits of royal domains (p. 203). No funds were required for education, for most people went without it (p. 411); and such schools as existed were controlled by the Church, which paid all costs. As the main Roman highways were still followed it might be thought that here was a source of expenditure. But they were ill maintained and forced labour must have largely reduced costs; the corvée was applied where extensive repairs had to be carried out. As far as public services went, the balancing of a Merovingian budget could hardly have been a difficult matter. Unfortunately the real spending department had only a partial connexion with the public service, and was not amenable to control. This was the court, with its extravagant ways, its indulgence in all the luxuries possible to the age, and its crowd of officials and dependents. Even here nothing but gross prodigality could have embarrassed the Merovingian king; but the prodigality was seldom absent, and all the easy chances of a surplus thrown away. Though there was much fraud on the revenue (IV. 20 (28)), and much leakage in collection, the counts must have brought in annually large sums of money, and there were irregular means of increasing income, including the presents received for appointing the givers to official posts and the frequent confiscation of estates. When he travelled, the king lived partly as his armies lived; his officers requisitioned all that his train required, and any city where he stayed had cause to remember his visit. His sons and daughters exercised the same privilege; the passage of royal families and their suites through their countries was fitly compared to the movement of locusts. Yet in spite of all these things a Chilperic would complain of poverty, and even better kings, like Sigibert, had to cast about for means wherewith to meet their growing expenses.

---

[1] References to fetters are very frequent in Gregory, and he often mentions stocks, V. S. M. ii. 34: *trabes, qua pedes eorum conclusi coartabantur*, V. P. vii. 3; ix. 7; even women were placed in them: e. g. a girl (V. S. M. iv. 41). Mention has been made on another page of fetters broken at the tombs of S. Nicetius at Lyons and S. Médard at Soissons (p. 309).

[2] V. S. M. v. 26. The debtors to the state here mentioned were released by S. Martin in person through the roof.

[3] One debtor imprisoned by a harsh creditor was almost starved by him. He escaped from bonds through the passing of relics near his prison, and took refuge in a church, where he was succoured by the charitable (V. M. iv. 47; cf. ii. 34).

[4] G. C. 86. They were liberated by the power of S. Sequanus, at whose tomb they took refuge.

[5] V. S. M. v. 16: a prisoner under conduct is *non solum catenis colla revinctus, verum etiam post tergum manibus conligatis*.

[6] The counts and their subordinates. Cf. pp. 200 ff.

The king's ordinary revenue was derived from various sources. Firstly from the yield of the great royal domains. These *villae* were in part state property of the Roman period taken over by Clovis, either directly, or from the Visigoths; they also included estates left vacant in troubled times, and absorbed into the royal property; the domain was constantly increased through the addition of estates confiscated by the royal tribunal, or by purchase and exchange on advantageous terms. Secondly, there were regular receipts from customs on merchandise passing through the country, crossing certain bridges, entering town gates, or exposed for sale at fairs.[1] Thirdly, there was the royal third part of all composition-fines imposed, by Teutonic law (*fredum*), with an occasional claim to the whole; there were, further, fines exacted from those not obeying the royal *ban* on the outbreak of war. Fourthly, there was the *tributum*, consisting of the poll-tax, or *capitatio humana*, paid by all who were not freemen, and therefore not by the Franks, and of the land-tax, *iugatio terrena*, or *census*, which again, with an intelligent administration, might have yielded much more than it did.[1] The Franks thus retained the Roman taxes on persons and on land; from the first these were both paid by the Gallo-Romans, but not by the free Franks, who only paid the land-tax. There are interesting passages in the History relating to the royal demand for *tributum*. Two are specially important as illustrating early attempts by kings of the second generation after Clovis to make the men of his own nation pay. In the first passage (III. 36) we read of the vengeance taken by the Franks after the death of Theudebert of Austrasia in A. D. 548 upon the dead king's minister, Parthenius: *pro eo quod eis tributa antedicti regis tempore inflixit.* In the second we find Count Audo taking refuge like Parthenius in a church after the death of his royal master Chilperic in 584, because at that king's desire, he had subjected to 'public tribute' Franks who had been free from it in the days of Childebert I (VII. 15).[2] These two passages introduce us to the burning question which contributed so much to the downfall of the Merovingian monarchy, and the transference of power to the Frankish aristocracy. Parthenius and Audo, agents of the kings in their effort to win ascendancy by fiscal means, are predecessors of the Protadius [3] who served Brunhild in the same manner and in so doing hastened her tragical end. The attempt of the unfortunate queen was the last made by the crown in Merovingian times; it ended in the definite defeat of the monarchy.[4]

---

[1] Pfister, in Lavisse, ii, pt. i, pp. 188–9. Customs-duty on goods was called *teloneum*, from the Greek τελώνιον, Latin *telonium*, a tax-collector's office. The customs were farmed out, and might have been made to yield larger sums by better methods.

---

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, as above, ch. xi, pp. 242 ff.

[2] He joined Fredegund in sanctuary. *Habebat secum* (i. e. the queen) *Audonem iudicem qui . . . multos de Francis qui tempore Childeberti regis senioris ingenui fuerunt publico tributu subegit.*

[3] Protadius was murdered in the royal tent ('Fredegar', *Chron.* iv, p. 27).

[4] The Council of Paris (A. D. 615) set the seal on the royal defeat. Lothar was compelled to renounce the policy of the successors of Clovis. The office of Mayor of the Palace became elective and the electors were the Frankish aristocracy. The claim to tax the Franks was definitely abandoned. The bishops, as a reward for their support of the Franks against the Crown,

Other important passages relate to general taxation, without special reference to the Franks. They illustrate too the methods of collection pursued by Chilperic and by Childebert II respectively. The first of these kings, desirous of increasing his revenue without regard for any moral consideration, ordered measures so harsh and impositions so heavy that many persons left their homes and abandoned their possessions, passing over into the dominions of other kings;[1] the people of Limoges were made desperate, and threatened Chilperic's brutal referendary, Mark, with death. Not long after, an epidemic threatening the lives of her young sons, the conscience even of Queen Fredegund was momentarily smitten; she threw into the fire the tax-registers of her own cities,[2] urging Chilperic to follow her example. 'Let us burn these iniquitous lists,' she cried, 'and be content with that which King Lothar enjoyed.' Even this merciless woman perceived that Chilperic had unfairly increased the taxes levied for his father. The attitude of King Childebert to the problem of raising revenue was very different. In 589 Maroveus, bishop of Poitiers, asked him to send commissioners to that city to revise the registers of the *census*, or land-tax, which, through death and other causes, was pressing unfairly upon the impoverished and upon widows and orphans (IX. 30). The commissioners were sent, and acted in the manner desired by the bishop.[3]

They afterwards proceeded to Tours with the object of carrying out a similar revision, but met with a very different reception. The bishop of Poitiers had invited their presence;

---

secured the abandonment of royal interference with episcopal elections and other advantages. The apparent revival of the monarchy under Dagobert was deceptive; he never had the absolute power of the sons and grandsons of Clovis; and the old royal line reached its ignominious end with the powerless *fainéant* kings.

[1] V. 21 (28). *Descriptiones novas et graves in omni regno suo fieri iussit.* The taxes were payable both on land and slaves: *tam de reliquis terris quam de mancipiis.*

[2] V. 26 (34). These were presumably her dower-cities, presented to her by the king as a *morgengabe* upon her marriage.

[3] *Discutientes per ordinem, relaxantes pauperes et infirmos, illos quos iusticiae conditio tributarios dabat censo publico subdiderunt.* This chapter is very important, showing the persistence of a state tax (*census publicus*) demanded by the king as sovereign in the manner of the Roman emperors. Some earlier writers on Frankish economy argued that the kings claimed the right of taxation as theoretical owners of all the land in their kingdoms. This is improbable; they taxed as successors of the Roman rulers of Gaul and inheritors of Roman rights.

at Tours they were unwelcome visitors, and Gregory himself stood forth as their determined opponent. This difference of attitude is explained by the presence in Tours of the remains and the famous shrine of S. Martin. The saint had won for his city a remission of taxes by kings fearful of his miraculous power, a privilege which Hilary had not obtained for Poitiers.[1] Lothar I had destroyed, in fear of Martin, a register already made; his son Charibert, from the same motive, had sworn to preserve the immunity of the city, but apparently gave orders by which it was violated. Though sorely tempted to take the money which his Count, Gaiso, had actually begun to collect, he finally burned his capitulary with his own hand and remitted the proceeds of Gaiso's enterprise to the church of S. Martin. Sigibert in his turn left Tours untaxed, and so did Childebert until this, the fourteenth year of his reign. It was indefensible, argued Gregory, that the privilege should now be threatened. His arguments prevailed; the whole episode shows how the finance of a Merovingian kingdom might be hampered by uneconomic causes, and how valuable an asset to a city and a diocese was the tomb of a formidable saint.[2]

In addition to the above regular revenue, the kings might benefit by receipts from extraordinary sources such as presents,[3] the royal share of the booty brought back from warlike expeditions, and the subsidies occasionally received from abroad as the price of alliance. We have seen how the astute Ripuarian kings took money from both sides for doing nothing in Italy (pp. 104, 122). These sums were often large. Maurice Tiberius disbursed fifty thousand *solidi* to Childebert II, to whom the Lombards, though unsubdued by his armies, offered in their turn a voluntary tribute. The payments of foreign or dependent peoples brought an uncertain increase to the royal coffers. They were often irregular. The Lombards, who stood in great fear of the empire, were punctual in payment. The Bretons and the Saxons, on the other hand, were quick to break their engagements.

---

[1] Clermont in Auvergne was given an immunity similar to that of Tours (X. 7).

[2] The experience of the commissioners at Tours is related in the same chapter (IX. 30), where Gregory's arguments appear in full. The passage describing Charibert's unwilling sacrifice is vividly expressed: he made it, *ingemiscens ac metuens virtutem sancti Martini*. The power of Martin appeared even in the case of Childebert's respectable commissioners. A citizen named Audinus, prompted by spite, or in furtherance of one of those family feuds of which Tours was sometimes the scene, had produced an old tax-register, or copy of a register, and placed it in their hands. Shortly afterwards his son was carried off by a fever.

[3] Gifts were brought by *antrustions* and notables on occasion of royal betrothals or the birth of royal children. An example occurs in the History, where the gifts of Chilperic's daughter Rigunth are described (VI. 32 (45)).

Though Gaul was chiefly an agricultural country, there are many allusions to merchants, largely 'Syrians' and Jews (pp. 175 ff.), going to and fro; there was much activity at the port of Marseilles, through which products from the East entered Gaul; there was coastal and river traffic. The story of King Theudebert's loan of seven thousand gold pieces to the city of Verdun (III. 34) shows that money was advanced for the prosecution of business at recognized rates of interest.[1]

Currency.[2] In the first century of Frankish dominion in Gaul a great number of imperial (Roman fifth-century and Byzantine) coins were in circulation, with a number struck by the Visigoths. The four imperial mints of Trèves, Lyons, Arles, and Narbonne had ceased to function after the fall of the empire. The first Frankish king with coins bearing his own effigy was Theudebert, grandson of Clovis, who struck gold *solidi* (*sols*) and thirds of *solidi* (*trientes*). The former imitated coins of Justinian, and bear on the reverse the figure of Victory; their legend is in Latin, and gives the king the title of *victor*, in allusion to his Italian campaign.[3] But gold and silver coins of the sixth-century kings are rare; a *triens* of Childebert I, another of Charibert, and three of Guntram are in existence.[4] There is bronze money of this date, but the majority of Merovingian coins date from the seventh and eighth centuries, when they were issued from a great number of mints, not only in large cities, but in smaller towns, and even in *vici* and *villae*. A quantity of false money was made, consisting of base metal gilded; examples of this exist, and it is probable that unscrupulous kings were wont to pay their debts in coins of this kind. Gregory himself tells us that Clovis paid the traitors who betrayed Ragnachar to him in spurious coin, cynically remarking that his money was appropriate to his creditors (II. 42). Coins were also often short in weight, and this explains the mention of ounces and pounds of gold and silver when coins of fixed denomination were in circulation; it was necessary for the vendor to weigh the pieces which he received.[1] In III. 15 the Frankish master of Attalus declares that for such a prisoner the ransom money would amount to ten pounds of gold; he does not state the amount in *solidi*.

---

[1] The citizens of Verdun were ready to repay the loan with interest: *Pecuniam tuam cum usuris legitimis reddimus.* They were a business community: *At illi negotia exercentes, divites per hoc effecti sunt*; and, adds Gregory, *usque hodie magni habentur.* For commerce see A. Marignan, as above, pp. 144 ff.

[2] B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque d'Irminon.* i (Prolegomena), ch. iv; M. Prou, *Catalogue des monnaies françaises de la Bibliothèque Nationale : Les monnaies mérovingiennes*, Paris, 1892; A. Blanchet and A. Dieudonné, *Manuel de numismatique française*, vol. i (Paris, Picard, 1912); K. von Inama-Sternegg, *Deutsche Wirthschaftsgeschichte*, vol. i.

[3] Prou thinks that they were produced in Italy; they are much finer in style than later Merovingian coins (p. 32).

[4] The *denier*, deriving its name from the Roman *denarius*, was established by Clovis as equal to one-fortieth of a *sol*. But it appears to have remained a nominal unit; no actual coins representing it being made before the seventh century (P. Guilhiermoz, 'Remarques diverses sur les poids et mesures du moyen âge' in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxx (1919), pp. 44–6).

Coins were issued by the Church, as well as by the kings, and from the seventh century episcopal silver money is more abundant than royal. In the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris there is a coin of Stephen, bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône in the middle of the sixth century.[2] Ecclesiastical coins sometimes bear the name of the bishop of the diocese, sometimes that of its cathedral church (*ecclesia*);[3] but famous churches not of cathedral rank had their own money: among these were S. Denis, S. Médard of Soissons, and, it need hardly be said, S. Martin of Tours. The churches and bishops must have employed their own moneyers, though there is no documentary evidence that the kings conceded them this right.[4]

Names of moneyers are frequent on Merovingian coins.[5] The Life of S. Eloi by S. Ouen mentions an *aurifex Abbo* as controlling the mint at Limoges, and it is very probable that goldsmiths and silversmiths often undertook to strike coins. The gold *solidus* was not struck for general use; it became a nominal coin. The piece of highest value was the *denier*, a Merovingian imitation of the imperial *triens*.

---

[1] Light money had been current in Italy under Theodoric, whose guards once complained that they were paid in *solidi* of imperfect weight: *nec integri ponderis solidos percipere* (Cassiodorus, *Var*. I. x).

[2] Prou, as above, No. 163.

[3] Thus there are coins of Angers, Limoges, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Clermont, Senlis. The name of a church was probably a better guarantee that the coin was of the right weight than the name of a king.

[4] Prou, as above, p. lx.

[5] *Ibid*., p. lxxx. In G. C. 103 Gregory mentions a moneyer, but does not give his name. For the moneyers see A. de Barthélemy, 'Étude sur les monnayeurs' in *Rev. Arch*. N. S. xi, pp. 1 ff. Some idea of the absolute value of the *solidus* or *sol* may be gathered from the fact that in the time of Clovis twelve *sols* purchased a horse, three a cow, and one an ox.

e. Warfare; the Army.

As military organizers the Franks stood on a low level; their methods were those of a barbaric tribe long after they had settled in Gaul and become a nation.[1]

The army was not a standing force,[2] but raised afresh on every occasion. The royal *heriban*, or summons to arms, was issued in spring or in the early summer; it first went to the dukes and counts, who called out their men. It was a general levy, to which a very few exceptions were allowed by royal favour, though it was usual only to take one man from a single household. When the king did not command in person,[3] he could appoint a son or royal prince, and in default of these a high official; in the sixth century this was not always the Mayor of the Palace, as it came to be in the century following.[4] Under the commander-in-chief, dukes led the counts of their districts; where there was no duke, the counts led their own levies; the principle of service was still personal, it did not become territorial till the time of Charles the Great. But by degrees the custom arose of small groups of men joining the army as units under the landowner on whose property they lived; this was an important development and one of the contributory causes to the establishment of feudalism in later times.[5] The feudal bond began when large estates granted by the kings as 'benefices' were not resumed by the crown on the death of the beneficiary, but allowed to become hereditary. At first Gallo-Romans were not admitted into Frankish armies; their enrolment only began under the grandsons of Clovis. Sometimes it was compulsory, under pressure from dukes or counts, sometimes voluntary; material advantages, such as valuable plunder, sometimes accrued to those serving in successful campaigns. The inhabitants of certain regions of Gaul were regarded as especially bound to serve, through the fact that their forefathers had been *foederati* of the Roman Empire. The colony of Saxons at Bayeux was in this category, as was that of the Theifali in the district of Tiffauges (p. 172); the Burgundians had also been *foederati*. Troops were naturally levied in those parts of the kingdom nearest to the scene of action; thus Chilperic attacked the Bretons with an army raised from the surrounding regions (V. 19 (26)). The Church enjoyed certain special exemptions for her own people, as for example at Tours; respect for these she was enabled to enforce through the fear of the kings and their agents for the powerful saints protecting the privileged area.[1] After the defeat of Gundovald, the Count of Bourges sought to exact a money fine from certain defaulters who should have joined King Guntram's army sent against the pretender,[2] and now took refuge in a 'house of S. Martin' in the territory of the city (VII. 41 (42)).[3] The 'agent' resisted his entry on the ground that the men, as belonging to S. Martin, were not liable to enrolment. The count roughly answered, 'I have nothing to do with this Martin, whom thou art forever bringing into these questions', and forced his way into the court; whereupon the resentment

---

[1] C. W. C. Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (1923), pp. 51 ff.; C. Langlois, *L'armée à travers les âges: le service militaire*, &c., Paris, 1899; H. Delbrück, *Kriegskunst*, ii, Bk. IV; E. Boutaric, *Institutions militaires de la France avant les armées permanentes*, Paris, 1863; Fustel de Coulanges, as above, c. 12, pp. 288 ff.; A. Marignan, as above, pp. 151 ff.

[2] The exceptions were special bodies of guards maintained on certain frontiers, and the *antrustiones* (p. 386), or sworn body-guard of the king, a small force, probably seldom assembled as a single corps (Pfister, in Lavisse, as above, p. 191). The fighting men in Merovingian armies were freemen; *lidi* (p. 391) seem to have accompanied the troops as servants of their masters, not as soldiers. M. Prou, *La Gaule mérov.*, p. 76.

[3] Sigibert commanded his own armies, like his ancestors Theudebert and Theuderic; so, on occasion, did his son Childebert II. But Childebert often gave the command of armies to dukes, as did Chilperic. Guntram hardly ever took the field in person.

[4] Strange as it may seem, referendaries might be appointed.

[5] Pfister, as above, p. 192. The fact that levies were commanded by dukes

---

or counts without local influence, and mere nominees of the court, accounts in great measure for the general lack of discipline (Oman, as above, p. 60).

[1] The tenant farmers of the Church in the diocese of Tours may have been exempt.

[2] The fines for not obeying the *ban* were heavy. The Ripuarian law exacted sixty *solidi* from a free Frank, and half the sum from a Gallo-Roman, a freedman, and a Church vassal (*Lex Rip*. lxv. 2); the free Frank thus paid the value of ten horses. Bourges and its territory furnished large numbers of fighting men for Guntram's armies. In VI. 31 we find fifteen thousand men levied.

[3] This can hardly have been a church of S. Martin. The word *agens* suggests that the building was secular, and merely belonged to the Church. It may have belonged to a *villa* in ecclesiastical possession.

of the saint soon endangered his health. The Merovingian soldier received no equipment; he had to bring his own. Nor did he receive rations: in their own country the troops requisitioned supplies for which no payment was made, in hostile country they pillaged as they pleased; often there was little difference between their treatment of the king's territory and that of his enemies. What indeed could be expected of untrained, undisciplined men without pay or commissariat, led by incompetent generals of whom they knew nothing, the commander-in-chief perhaps a man of law who had never seen a tented field? The kings, who alone could enforce obedience, tended more and more to stay at home, though even the king might be disobeyed (IV. 9 (14)). What prospect was there of change when the kings did nothing to remedy defects, and, if ever they censured the conduct of their armies, did so with Jeremiads which promised no reform.[1] The difference between the Merovingian kings and the great Theodoric in Italy was immense. That ruler exhorted his armies to moderation, saw to the organization of a regular commissariat, made good any damage caused by his troops through a remission of taxes, and resolutely forbade the practice of 'living on the country'.[2] It is not to be wondered at that the disorganization of Merovingian armies attracted unfavourable comment in other countries; thus the emperor, Leo the Wise, criticized the Franks for their lack of discipline.[3] To cure the evil, strong and able men were needed, and they were not found until the House of Pepin began to rise above the Merovingian royal house. Not till the two Pepins, Charles Martel and Charles the Great, had reorganized their armies did the Franks reach a position in the world commensurate with their real strength.[4]

The history provides notable instances of disgraceful conduct on the part of Frankish levies.

Chilperic's campaign of 583 showed the Merovingian army at its worst, even though the king took the field in person.

---

[1] As Guntram, after the scandalous failure of his arms against the Visigoths.

[2] Cassiodorus, *Var.* iii, Letters 38, 41–2; iv. 36; v. 11: *Ite moderati. Tale sit iter vestrum quale decet esse qui laborant pro salute cunctorum*; 13: the army must duly receive its *annonas constitutas: ne perniciosa direptio gravet provinciales.*

[3] Oman, as above, p. 61.

[4] From the time of Clovis's sons down to that of the great Austrasians, the

Starting from Paris, he first moved to Melun, burning and devastating everything in his path. An expedition dispatched against Bourges led to scenes which Gregory describes as surpassing anything known to antiquity.[1] Fruit trees and vines were cut down, churches sacked and burned. Chilperic, unable to control his followers, even when peace had been concluded with Guntram, was obliged to have the count of Rouen put to the sword. His armies had made no attempt to spare his own territory.[2] The record of Guntram's army, raised to attack the Visigoths in 585, is almost incredible.[3] Passing through that king's own land it burned houses and crops, cut down the olives and vines, carried off into captivity such men as had not taken refuge in the walled cities, and finally showed no respect either for the churches or the clergy, stripping the former of their plate and valuables, and murdering the latter even at the altar. It was natural enough that when this army returned without accomplishing anything against the enemy, Guntram should have yielded to despondency, and spoken bitterly of Frankish degeneration.[4] He reproached and threatened the generals before an assembly of notables and bishops. They replied by throwing the blame on the general system of government, which had produced a lawless and intractable people. Nothing was done to effect reform. Childebert's forces were no better. When they invaded Lombardy in 590 they treated the regions of Gaul through

---

Frankish borders ceased to expand. All the foreign enterprises of the kings came to nothing, as, under the circumstances, they could not fail to do.

After the reforms of the house of Pepin the danger of indiscipline rose from the discontent of men called upon, year in and year out, to do military service in foreign lands, a discontent only allayed by more gifts of land, and even bishoprics.

[1] VI. 22 (31): *talisque depopulatio inibi acta est quale nec antiquitus audita fuisset, ut nec domus remaneret, nec vinea nec arbores, sed cuncta succiderent et debellarent. Nam et ab ecclesiis auferentes sacra ministeria, ipsas incendio cremabant. . . . At isti qui Bituricas obsidebant . . . tantas praedas secum sustulerunt ut omnis regio illa . . . valde putaretur evacuata vel de hominibus vel de ipsis pecoribus.*

[2] *Per Toronicum incendia, praedas, et homicidia tanta fecerunt, sicut solet contra inimicos fieri.* Cattle disease followed these barbarous raids, and raged to such extent that 'it became a novelty to see a horse or ox'.

[3] VIII. 30.

[4] Their forefathers, he said, built churches, venerated the bishops, and vanquished their enemies by putting their trust in God: *nos vero non solum Deum non metuimus, verum etiam sacra eius vastamus, ministros interficimus, ipsa quoque sanctorum pignora* (relics) *in ridiculo discerpimus ac vastamus.* Men who so act can never win the victory: *ideo manus nostrae sunt invalidae, ensis tepescit, nec clipeus nos, ut erat solitus, defendit ac protegit.*

which they passed like enemy's country. They effected nothing by their campaign, were weakened by dysentery, and returned in such destitution that they had to sell their clothes and weapons for food (X. 3). Guntram's army sent against Septimania in 589 was entrapped and wholly put out of action by the Visigoths, through the overconfidence and stupidity of the commanders. The enemy surprised these leaders banqueting at their ease, and by a feint of retreat led them into an ambush. Five thousand men were killed, two thousand taken prisoners. The rest escaped by flight, leaving behind all their gear (IX. 31).

As tacticians the Merovingian commanders were backward and unenterprising. They adhered too much to the old close formation; it was long before the value of the mounted arm was understood, and the collaboration of horsemen with foot-soldiers was neglected.

The failure to use cavalry was remarkable, as Delbrück has observed, since the Batavi, predecessors of the Franks on the Lower Rhine, had provided the Roman armies with serviceable squadrons of horse. But as the Franks began and carried through their first great conquests with infantry alone, it was natural that the development of cavalry should have been slow. It only came by degrees, with the transformation of the fighting chiefs into a landed aristocracy. The first mentions of Frankish cavalry occur in III. 7, where many Frankish horsemen in the army of Theuderic, son of Clovis, came to grief in concealed pits dug by the Bretons (*multi Francorum equites corruerunt*), and in the description of Theudebert's invasion of Italy in 539,[1] though in the latter case the mounted force seems to have been little more than a bodyguard about the king's person. In IV. 30 and VII. 35 horsemen are mentioned in the armies of Count Firminus (567) and Duke Leudigisil (584).

---

[1] Procopius, *De bell. goth.* ii. 25. In 612, at Zülpich (Tolbiac), and again a hundred years later at the great battle of Poitiers, fought by Charles Martel against the Saracens, the Franks still relied upon infantry in close formation, awaiting attack without any attempt to manœuvre (Oman, as above, pp. 57–8). Though in time they learned from Arab example (Marignan, as above, p. 155), they continued to disregard cavalry even at a much later period, and in campaigns where its importance should have been obvious, as in 848, when they encountered the Bretons at Ballon. The Bretons, mounted on ponies, rode along their close lines discharging showers of spears and inflicted heavy loss upon them during their retreat (H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, pp. 437–8).

In the Italian expedition of Buccelin (Butilin), described by Agathias, we have descriptions of Frankish tactics which seem to show a certain advance. A force of two thousand, partly infantry, partly cavalry, was surprised by a sally of Narses from Rimini, while ravaging the country about that city. The Frankish infantrymen stood in close formation, at the edge of a wood, holding their bucklers before them; the horsemen were placed on the two flanks.[1] The small troop led by Narses failed to break their line, but by a feint of flight was able to destroy all the foot-soldiers imprudent enough to pursue them. At the battle of Casilinum, on the Volturno near Capua, when Narses was attacked by Buccelin, the Byzantine army in its turn used the disposition adopted by the Franks in the above skirmish. On this occasion the Franks and Alamanni attacked in a hollow wedge-formation.[2] They broke the Byzantine centre, but when they had pushed through to the rear-guard, Narses ordered his cavalry to close in from the flanks, preceded by bodies of light infantry. While the infantry engaged the Franks hand to hand, the mounted bowmen behind shot over their heads, hitting the backs of the Franks on the opposite flank. The Franks were thus assailed in front and rear and suffered a terrible disaster.[3]

Though the Frankish commanders were generally untrained amateurs without knowledge of military theory and practice, some of them had a natural genius, for instance, Mummolus for some time the successful leader of Guntram's armies. We are not told anything of the manner in which he won his engagements, but the devices employed by him at Avignon against Guntram Boso prove him possessed of an ingenious mind. He caused leaky boats to be placed on the Rhône at a spot where Boso's men would have to cross. They embarked without suspicion (*simpliciter*), and in the middle of the river the boat went down under them, and many were drowned. Before the walls of Avignon he had also prepared deep trenches or pits, full of water, which he then covered over. Guntram Boso was invited to confer with him at the spot, and rashly advanced in his heavy mail coat, preceded by a companion, who fell in and did not appear again. Boso in his turn fell in, and was dragged out with difficulty, holding the end of a spear extended to him.[1]

---

[1] Agathias, i, ch. 21.

[2] *Ibid.* ii, ch. 8.

[3] *Ibid.*, ch. 9. The battle is described by Gibbon in his forty-third chapter.

The tradition of Roman siege methods appears to have survived in Gaul.[2] At the investment of Convenae by Guntram's army,[3] the attacking commander brought up battering-rams on armoured wagons, affording protection for the assailants.[4] The defenders met this attack with showers of stones and barrels of lighted fat and pitch. The next morning the attacking force tried to scale the walls after filling a narrow gorge on the east of the town with fascines.[5] These efforts, however, failed, and the place was finally taken by the treachery of men within. The place was first provisioned for a very long siege, and the town then relieved of all useless mouths. Gundovald had persuaded the citizens to bring all their supplies within the walls; soon afterwards he tricked the people into making a sally and shut the gates upon them, their bishop being included in their number (VII. 34). By this means he secured enough corn and wine to ensure subsistence for years if his followers had been willing to hold out like men.[6] It may be added that Convenae was wiped out when captured by Guntram's forces. The soldiery was let loose into the town; all the people were put to the sword; the clergy were cut down at the very altars. When all were slain, the whole place was set on fire, until nothing remained but waste ground (VII. 38). It was not till more than five hundred years had elapsed that a new city arose under the name of S. Bertrand de Comminges.

The Franks were essentially fighters at close quarters. The only common missile weapons[7] were the throwing-axe (*francisca*) and the *angon*, a barbed javelin, almost the whole shaft of which was iron. Only the more important persons wore body-armour; the rank and file fought without metal defence, but carried oval wooden shields with iron bosses and rims. Helmets, body mail, and greaves were costly and highly prized, as we gather from the value assigned to them in Frankish law; a good mail-shirt was regarded as worth six oxen or two horses; a helmet was equal in value to one horse. Close-quarter weapons were the spear, straight two-edged sword about three feet long, the short-handled axe, and the one-edged knife-dagger, eighteen inches long, called *scramasax*: examples of these offensive weapons may be seen in the British and other historical museums. The rank and file protected the legs by binding them with strips of coarse linen or leather. Thus, as Oman remarks, the Franks kept to their national methods of body protection, and did not imitate the Roman system.[1] Gallo-Romans, however, are said by Procopius to have fought in the Frankish armies under their own standards, and wearing the Roman panoply, down to the heavy nailed sandals. But this custom did not last beyond the sixth century. The equipment of an important Frank in Gregory's time is illustrated by the description of that worn by Leudast, the wicked count of Tours, who made himself so detested that he went about fully armed, keeping on his harness even in the church house. He is described as wearing body-mail and a gorget, with a helm upon his head. He carried a quiver, apparently on a baldric, and a spear in his hand.[2] The mail used was probably ring-mail. The coat worn by Gundovald, which saved him from being pierced by a lance, appears to have been of this description.[3]

---

[1] VI. 18 (26). Both the Teutonic and the Celtic tribes were clever enough in defensive contrivances. The Thuringians, resisting Theuderic, son of Clovis, dug concealed pits before their line, into which the Franks fell (III. 7). *Abatis* were also employed with effect in wooded country, as they had been used by the Britons against Caesar (*De bell. Gall.* v. 8, 20).

[2] Cf. A. Marignan, *Études sur la civ. française*, i, pp. 54–5, 155–6.

[3] It may be noted that the besieging force was quartered in a formal encampment of tents (*falanga in suburbana urbis campania castra metata est, ibique extensis tenturiis resedebat* (VII. 35). Tents are often mentioned by Gregory in connexion with military campaigns.

[4] VII. 37: *novas ad distruendam urbem machinas praeparabat, plaustra enim cum arietibus, clitellis, et axibus tecta, sub quae exercitum properaret ad distruendos muros.*

[5] *Ibid.*: *Ex virgis fasces faciunt, quasi ad conplendam vallem profundam quae a parte orientis sita erat.*

[6] *Si viriliter stetissent.*

[7] The *francisca* had a rather long curved head. The *angon* (ἄγγων) was hurled into the enemy's shield, where it stuck fast, the butt trailing on the

---

ground. The Frank then rushed forward and, by putting his foot on the butt, forced down the enemy's defence. But the bow, though not general, seems to have been used. Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, an author whose works have not survived, accuses the Franks of using poisoned arrows (*sagittas effundere inlitas herbarum venenis*: quoted in H. F. ii. 8 (9)); and Leudast (V. 47) is described as *praecinctus pharetra*. Possibly flaming arrows may have been shot into besieged towns (H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, pp. 157, 244, 342).

[1] Σχῆμα τῶν Ῥωμαίων, ἔν τε τοίς ἄλλοις ἅπασι καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὑποδήμασι διασώζουσιν. Procopius (*De bell. Goth.* i. 12: quoted by Oman, p. 53).

[2] V. *48*: *in tali levitate elatus est ut in domo ecclesiae cum toracibus et loricis praecinctus pharetra et contum manu gerens, capite galeato ingrederetur, de nullo securus quia omnibus erat adversus.*

Gregory elsewhere uses the words *armorum apparatus* in a way suggesting that body defence is intended (VII. 46 (47)).

[3] VII. 38: *Et inmissa lancea voluit eum transfigere, sed repulsa a circulis*

Agathias, in his description of Buccelin's defeat on the Volturno by Narses,[1] notes that only a few Franks wore helmets or body-armour. The soldiers fought stripped to the waist; on the lower part of the body they wore breeches of linen, or, occasionally, leather. They wore swords, and each had a small buckler carried with the sword on the left side. They had neither bows and arrows,[2] nor slings; their missile weapon was the *angon*. For the finishing blow they used the battle-axe. The body defence of other Teutonic tribes resembled that of the Franks. The Lombard champion who stood forth to defy the Frankish invaders on the bank of the river issuing from the Lake of Lugano was protected by a helmet and mail coat, and brandished a spear.[3] The *scramasax* is especially mentioned as the weapon used by the emissaries sent by Fredegund to murder Sigibert at Vitry. On this occasion the blades were poisoned.[4]

Military weapons were often carried as a defence upon the road in travelling. A merchant on a journey was accompanied by two slaves armed with spears.[5] The slave of one Sichar, objecting to a rebuke, drew his sword from his baldric and cut his master down.[6]

The Franks were not sea-rovers like the Saxons; they had no liking for maritime adventure. But the possession of extensive coasts compelled them to give some thought to shipping, and at quite an early period the raids of pirates from the north must have suggested resistance to such attacks. In the time of Theuderic, son of Clovis, the Danes landed on some part of his coast, raided the inland country, and carried the booty to the shore, where their king, 'Chlochilaic', was

---

loricae nihil nocuit. The Sarmatians had worn coats of ring-mail in the south of Russia about the beginning of the Christian era, also using scaled body-armour (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (1922), pp. 121, 143). Chain mail in the strict sense, with interlinked rings, is seen on a relief at Tak-i-Bostan, in Persia, representing the Sassanian king Chosroes (Khusrau) II (d. A. D. 628). See F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs* (1910), pl. xxxvii.

[1] Agathias, *Hist.* ii. 1.

[2] But bows and arrows were sometimes used and are mentioned by Gregory (II. 9); they were employed in the chase (A. Marignan, as above, p. 154).

[3] X. 3: *lorica protectus et galea, contum manu gestans.*

[4] IV. 36 (51): *Tunc duo pueri cum cultris validis quos vulgo scramasaxos vocant, infectis veneno, malificati a Fredegunda regina, . . . utraque ei latera feriunt.*

[5] VII. 45.

[6] *Ibid.* 46: Sichar was not killed; the slave was taken, mutilated, and condemned to the gibbet.

awaiting them with the ships. But the energetic Theudebert (p. 49), son of Theuderic, came down upon them with a strong force, apparently supported by Frankish ships,[1] defeated them 'in a sea fight', and recovered all that they had taken. Some small naval forces seem to have been kept up by the different kingdoms. During Guntram's unlucky campaign against Septimania in 585, a Frankish squadron was sent from the Loire or the Gironde to harry the Visigothic province of Galicia, but, like the armies on land, was defeated by the enemy.[2] Even in later times, under greater kings than the Merovingians, it was shown that the Franks had not the naval genius. In 810 Charles the Great ordered the construction of ships in all the ports of France to meet the threatened danger from the Norsemen, and went in the following year to see the progress made at Boulogne and at Ghent. But when, after his death, the threat became reality, the Vikings swept the Frankish ships from the sea.[3]

Trading ships existed in some numbers in the Mediterranean, and there is occasional mention of them. Though we hear less of shipping on the Atlantic coast, it must have been of some local importance, both for fishing and for local trade. Prince Chramn, before joining issue with his father Lothar I in Brittany had ships waiting to take him off in case of defeat.[4] The Bretons must have had ships, for they always had business in the deep waters, and were able to maintain communication with their kinsmen in Britain. What may be called Channel traffic between the north-west of Gaul and the south-east of England had been largely interrupted by the invasion of the pagan Saxons, and probably did not recover to any extent until the beginning of the seventh century. All commercial vessels may have been pressed into the royal service when required.

---

[1] III. 3: *hostibus navali praelio superatis opprimet, omnemque rapinam terrae restituit.*

[2] Chronicle of John of Biclar, *ad ann.*

[3] The Goths in like manner were not by nature a seafaring people. But Theodoric the Great, in 523–6, anxious to expand Italian commerce, and also to meet any hostile attack by sea, ordered the construction at Ravenna of one thousand *dromons*. He not only arranged for the cutting and the floating down the rivers of cypresses and pines for their building, but formed a reserve of sailors by advances of pay (Cassiodorus, *Var.* v, Letters 16–20).

[4] IV. 13 (20): *naves in mare paratas habens.* Amalaric, the Visigoth king, who had married and ill-used a daughter of Clovis, in like manner had ships ready to secure his retreat (III. 10).

III

THE MEROVINGIAN CHURCH

I

THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY

a. General Survey.

WITH a country devoid of general education and ruled by barbaric masters; with a faith prone to an excessive reliance upon miracles, which did little to help uprightness and the independent love of good; with examples in high places of cruelty, treachery, and indifference to bloodshed; with greed, roughness, and lack of finer feeling on all hands; with much oppression and little justice for the poor; with a civilization, in short, exposed to every influence adverse to right living, the conditions for true religion in sixth-century Gaul were as bad as they well might be. The Church strove to mitigate the ills of the time, but often by methods which aggravated the evil. And the Church herself encouraged the resort to miracle as the master remedy; she hindered by her very kindness the self-help which the cruelty of the state already made too hard. The Church fed the poor and set the prisoner free; hers was the one influence devoted to alleviation of distress. Yet she could but mend and patch a structure which needed building anew from the foundations. As the Franks grew more corrupt by contact with Gallo-Roman ways, the Gallo-Romans grew rougher and more lawless by the example of the Franks. There was a general degradation, a coarsening of life; the rulers of the kingdoms and the notables whom they failed to control often set the worst example; and the rulers of the Church, by association with the government in the interests of public order, had largely surrendered their power of free action. To illustrate the morality of the time, we may derive from Gregory's own works sufficient instances drawn from all classes of society to show how far violence and corruption had spread through the whole community.

At the time of Gregory's activity as bishop of Tours, Christianity had been implanted in Gaul for four hundred years.[1]

---

[1] The first Christian communities had been established at Lyons and Vienne in the second half of the second century. For a review of the earliest Chris-

But the history of its early progress is obscure, and sparsely supported by documentary evidence. We may gather this from Gregory's own account of its beginnings in I. 28 (30), which sheds some light in the obscurity, but a light which is neither penetrating nor clear. After the persecution at Lyons under the emperor Marcus Aurelius in 177, we hear of one great figure, Irenaeus, the champion of the Church against heresy, and we learn that Christian communities were expanding before the century closed. The third century witnessed great missionary activity: the seven missionaries mentioned by Gregory included among their number the names of Dionysius (Denis), Martial, and Saturninus (Sernin). But the process of evangelization is not clear to us, and more is known of Provence than of other parts of the country; bishoprics were established at Arles and other cities.[1] Of Aquitaine we learn little before the early fourth century, when there were bishops at Bordeaux and in other places. Farther to the north, Paris, Rouen, Sens, Reims, and Autun had their bishoprics; the sees of Trèves and Cologne had been established in the Rhine basin. Gaul was fortunate in suffering little from the persecutions of Diocletian's reign, owing her relative immunity to the toleration of Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine the Great. But during all this period, and for long afterwards, Christianity was centred in the towns; the pagan country-side was little affected. The great evangelist of Gaul was S. Martin, whose name was destined to re-echo through the land for centuries, while his renown as a worker of miracles made his tomb the goal of innumerable pilgrims.[2] Martin, a contemporary of Hilary of Poitiers, to whom he came on first entering Gaul, was consecrated bishop of Tours in 372. Himself leading the attack upon pagan temples and helping to drag down idols, he lent enthusiasm to others, and at his death, probably in 397, the heathen area had been much reduced. But paganism was

---

tianity in Gaul see C. Bayet in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, ii, pp. 1 ff. and 346 ff.

[1] Marseilles, Vaison, Nice, Orange, and Apt.

[2] The basilica of S. Martin, where the saint was buried, lay a short distance outside the city; it was not, like the cathedral church, within the old walls. S. Martin's life was first recorded in a literary form by Sulpicius Severus, a man who was not only an enthusiast for his subject, but a good writer. In the sixth century Gregory himself wrote a prose life and Fortunatus one composed in hexameters.

still very far from being extirpated; not only in the fifth century, but even in the sixth and seventh there were many heathen survivals (pp. 245 ff.).

The occupation of Central and Southern Gaul by the Arian Visigoths and Burgundians was not good for the temper of Christianity. A bitter antagonism reigned between the Catholics and the heretics, who became hardly less detestable in the eyes of the orthodox in the fifth and sixth centuries than the Saracens of a later age; the treatment of Arian bishops by orthodox writers was hardly less hostile than that accorded to the Jews. The feeling perhaps went even deeper; the Jew was an open and external enemy; the Arian was regarded as a traitor within the gates. It was not until the expulsion of the Visigoths from Aquitaine by Clovis, and the later conversion of the Burgundians to orthodoxy, that the extreme tension was reduced; even then it remained acute until the conversion of King Recared in 587. For although the main power of the Visigoths was now south of the Pyrenees, they had in Septimania [1] an Arian outpost in Gaul, the existence of which was a source of irritation to the Gallican Church, and to Guntram, the most religious of the Merovingian kings contemporary with Gregory. Many anecdotes and allusions in the History and in Gregory's other writings prove the intensity of orthodox feeling. We read, for instance, how the Arian Bishop Cyrola was confounded by his own wickedness; how, knowing himself unable to compete in miracle with Catholic bishops, he hired a beggar to pretend blindness that he might appear to have worked a miraculous cure; but in the end was miserably exposed (II. 2). We are told that murder was done by Arians through the instrumentality of a poisoned chalice, a thing impossible among Catholics. In the more anecdotal *Glory of the Martyrs* we are shown a heretical priest at table in the house of an Arian married to a Catholic woman. He puts his spoon into a hot dish, and, in his Arian greediness, so burns his stomach as forthwith to expire. Thereupon a Catholic priest among the company cries aloud in a voice of triumph: 'Of a verity God hath avenged His servants'; then, turning to his host, adds: 'this man's memory hath perished with a noise, and the Lord endureth forever. Do thou set on food, that

---

[1] Roughly, the Narbonnaise. Cf. p. 145.

I may eat!'[1] These things give the measure at once of the credulity characteristic of the time, and of the hatred which could believe anything against the supporters of an unorthodox sect.

The religious polemics of the sixth century are well illustrated by Gregory's own theological duels; in their length, their acerbity, and their dryness these disputations resemble many political encounters of our own age, and, like these, deserve their preservation not as models of intellectual achievement, but as documents revealing the state of contemporary thought. One of the best is that with Oppila, an envoy from the Visigothic king to Childebert II, who stopped on his way at Tours, and was entertained by Gregory. At first the Arian sought to evade the encounter; he even went to the length of feigning to be a Catholic.[2] But Gregory forced him into the open, claiming in the end to have reduced him to silence.[3]

The enervating effect of religious strife was a peculiar misfortune at a time when the Church needed all her weapons against those who cared far less for the Christian faith than did the Arians. On the throne of Neustria sat the very unorthodox Chilperic, beside him a queen given to witchcraft and assassinations, about him high officials no better than their master. On the highways moved strange religious quacks calling themselves Christs; murders were done in churches, perjuries committed before the altars. The doom of the world seemed near when there were always wars and rumours of wars, and Antichrists seduced the faithful. Men thought of the end foretold, recognizing all the attendant signs.[4] The most extraordinary of these religious quacks announcing the last times was a fugitive serf of Amelius, bishop of Bigorra. This man proceeded through Gaul clad in a long sleeveless tunic (*colobium*), and bearing a cross from which hung *ampullae*, said to contain oil from holy places. He proclaimed himself a pilgrim from Spain, carrying relics of the martyrs Vincent and Felix.

---

[1] *Tunc exultans presbyter nostrae religionis ait: 'Vere ultus est Deus servos suos'; et conversus ad virum cuius erat convivium dixit: Periit huius memoria cum sonitu, et Dominus in aeternum permanet. Tu vero appone quod comedam* (G. M. 79).

[2] VI. 26 (40). Oppila had attended mass, but had not communicated: *cognitumque est, mendum esse quod dixerat se esse catholicum.*

[3] *Ibid.*: *Post haec, dato silentio, ab altercatione cessatum est.*

[4] Matt. xxiv. 24.

Coming to Tours he treated the bishop with haughty insolence, rebuking him on the evening of his arrival for not leaving the table to give a ceremonial greeting to the holy relics, and the next morning intruding upon him at an early hour, again rebuking him with threats, and pushing past him into his private oratory.[1] This man went on to Paris, arriving at the time when Bishop Ragnemod was celebrating Rogations. Followed by a motley crowd, he became such a nuisance that the bishop had him shut up, took away the properties of his calling,[2] and caused them to be burned. Set free, and sent outside the city territory, he again began his malpractices, but the archdeacon now had him put in chains and confined. Gregory had just come to Paris, and was perhaps lodged in the church-house attached to the basilica of S. Julian. The impostor, escaping from durance, took refuge in this very church and unpleasantly interfered with the services of the night. Brought later before a council of bishops, he was recognized by his old master Amelius, who obtained his release and took him home. Desiderius, a religious quack claiming to receive messages from SS. Peter and Paul, was active in Tours itself in 587. Gregory was at the time absent, and the impostor had free play. The ignorant brought all manner of sick and afflicted persons to the ‘necromancer’, who, if he failed with his art (*nigromantia ingenii*), had recourse to the most drastic methods, such as treating paralytics after the manner of Procrustes, often with fatal results.[3] In public he professed great abstinence; but secretly he was so gluttonous that it was hardly possible for those who served him to keep pace with his voracity; he dressed for his part, wearing a tunic of goat's hair and a hood. On another occasion, the land being visited by plague, a man from Berry clothed himself with skins and went through the province of Arles to Javols, declaring himself a prophet; he had with him a woman called Mary, whom he styled his sister (X. 25). People flocked to him, and he professed to heal the sick by laying on of hands. He drew to him not merely simple laymen, but even priests.[1] Like Robin Hood, he despoiled the rich to help the poor, and so won great popularity. Arriving with a great following at Le Puy, he sent as messengers to the bishop, Aurelius, nude followers, dancing and playing, to announce his coming. But the bishop dispatched strong men of their hands (*viros strenuos*), one of whom slew ‘ this Christ, or rather Antichrist ’.[2] The time produced yet other Antichrists, with some of whom Gregory himself had to deal.[3]

---

[1] IX. 6.

[2] Besides the cross which he carried, he was possessed of a bag full of the roots of divers herbs, together with moles' teeth, mouse-bones, the nails and fat of bears. All this reminds us of the medicine-bags of witch-doctors among savage African tribes of to-day, or of the recipes of the witches in *Macbeth*.

[3] IX. 6: *Denique apprehendebant pueri eius manus hominis, alii vero diversis in partibus, ita ut nervi putarentur abrumpi.*

In a world like this the men to whom the defence of Christianity was committed found it hard to follow the law of universal kindness. We cannot wholly blame those who bore the brunt of a struggle often squalid and seldom intermitted, if they themselves grew hard ; if in their weariness they resorted to the stern *virtus* of champion saints rather than to the loving-kindness preached by Christ. They sought to appal men into decency through miracles less like those of the Gospels than that related in the Acts, when Ananias fell dead at the feet of Peter. The result is that, as we read, we seem to see Christ far in the background; his features, if they can be discerned, are those of the Judge [4] rather than those of the Good Shepherd, and there is no place at his side for Our Lady of Pity; we are back in the hard atmosphere of the Old Testament. There were still some Christlike men in the Church, but they found the air of sixth-century Gaul hard to breathe.

There was another danger, more subtle and damaging to the leaders of the Church. The State no longer opposed them, but was upon their side, and it was a meaner and far less virtuous state than Rome. To stand by the side of the Merovingian kings must have troubled the conscience of many a bishop ; he fought in compromising company. To have the help of a Lothar I was worse for the Church than to have the enmity of a Marcus Aurelius; if the small scene may be compared with the great, the half-support of a Chilperic harmed more insidiously than the fury of a Nero, or the calm hatred of a Diocletian. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, but the patronage of a Lothar withered like an ill wind. Intending good, the Church had allied herself with wanton Power, and she was now caught in a dilemma. It is not easy for us to judge the bishops who found themselves in these straits. They trusted that by turning the hearts of the kings they could save the people; but they found the Merovingian nature infinitely hard to change. Were they to abandon the work of two generations and begin again with challenge; or, trusting still in the possibility of conversion, were they to continue the sorry alliance? They had at least some ground for the hope that the terror of Martin in these royal hearts might stay open enmity to Christ; this hope seemed justified in the case of Guntram, in whom the will to good certainly existed. We cannot judge them, but may rather pity them in their embarrassment; we condole with men like Salvius, or Gregory himself, sometimes condemned to apparent time-serving, or to persuasion in the privacy of a royal villa, instead of rebuking the king in the light of day, like the Hebrew prophets, for doing evil in the sight of the Lord. The bishops saw more immediately than we can do the probable results to the country of such defiance, or of a withdrawal which should leave the kings to their own devices. They had not the opportunity of Moses; there was now no wilderness into which they could lead the people. It is easier to accuse them of backsliding from the early Christian spirit than to suggest a better policy than that which they pursued. By sharing in the government they leavened it with good; they sincerely trusted in reform; meanwhile their flocks, of which they were the sole protectors, were saved from the worst effects of violent despotism. The fate which befel Columban in Gaul seems to justify them in the course which they pursued. That courageous missionary entered the country not long after Gregory became bishop of Tours. He did not acquiesce in royal wickedness, but arraigned Brunhild, the queen-mother of Austrasia, without regard for consequences. The result was his expulsion from the kingdom, and the loss of his leadership by those who could ill afford to be thus deprived. Diocesan bishops were less free than migratory abbots, and action, unless adopted by all, could seldom have been effective. The abandonment by a conscientious bishop of his diocese would simply have led to the instalment of a more accommodating personality ; by such an exchange of shepherds the flock would have been more than ever exposed to the wolves prowling round the fold.

---

[1] *Sacerdotes. Sacerdos* is the word generally used for bishop, though, as here, it also preserved its original meaning of priest.

[2] *Ceciditque Cristus ille, qui magis Antecristus nominari debet.* The victims of the man's imposture declared that he was Christ, and that the woman Mary shared in his divinity.

[3] *Sed et per totas Gallias emerserunt plerique, qui per has prestigias adiungentes sibi mulierculas quasdam quae debacchantes sanctos eos confiterentur magnos se in populis praeferebant ; ex quibus nos plerosque vidimus, quod obiurgantes revocare ab errore nisi sumus.*

[4] Cf. G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 138.

Thus the Gallican Church of the sixth century suffered from the complete lack of persecution ; it lost the advantages of a single, conspicuous foe and of complete freedom in attack. Meanwhile the corruption spread through the flock and among the shepherds. The main body of its adherents had no longer the singleness of heart inspiring the early Christians; selfish superstition had replaced generous zeal. It grew more and more materialistic until Boniface reawakened the spiritual influence of Columban, and by his valiant example gave it for a while a new soul. The battling English Church of the seventh century had some of the advantages which the established Gallican Church lacked. Though its fortunes were still insecure, it had open foes and devoted adherents; it had oppressors and martyrs; all whole-hearted in their several causes. The kings, fresh-converted, were not sources of weakness but of strength, since they were still sincere and simple ; those still pagan were as whetstones to the edge of Christian zeal. What the one Church gained by the heathen fury of a Penda, the other lost by the compromising adherence of a Lothar or a Chilperic. In the new Anglo-Saxon kingdoms there was brutal violence enough, but there was far less half-civilized corruption; the removal of Roman influence was not absolute loss. This is why Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* breathes a simplicity and freshness which Gregory's does not possess ; it is also the reason why it makes duller reading. The persons in the drama are not half so various, the play of their relations to each other is far less subtle. We rise from the one book somewhat tired by the sameness of so many events and so many persons, but with a sense of encouragement and hope for mankind; the triumph of goodness seems assured. We set down the other rewarded by a rich abundance of detail and absorbed in the complexity of the characters, but with a feeling of despair for the human race. After perusal of Gregory, there seems no movement but that towards decay ; we accept the foreboding of his day : *mundus iam senescit.* After reading Bede, we are persuaded that the world, if rough, is young and capable of growing better. The sight of Penda's men burning Lindisfarne, seen by Cuthbert from Holy Isle, might be less desolating to a spiritual nature than that of the armies of the most pious Guntram ravaging and burning their own country.

b. Pagan Survival.

In the parts of Merovingian Gaul with which Gregory was familiar the pagan cults surviving into and beyond his time were chiefly Celtic under a Roman disguise ; Celtic deities had received the names of their nearest Roman parallels.[1] The Franks did not import the worship of Teutonic gods in Gaul ; the conversion to which Clovis compelled them imposed a swift oblivion, and in religious matters they soon fell under Gallo-Roman influence, most of the bishops of their new faith being Gallo-Romans.[2]

But though Frankish beliefs contributed so little, the extent of pagan survival in the sixth century, and even in the seventh, seems to have been greater than is commonly believed. The first Christian emperors had endeavoured to make an end of heathen practices ; but the apostate Julian had restored the temples to their old position, and Valentinian and Valens had not openly reversed his policy. A different course was pursued by Gratian and Theodosius, who encouraged the destruction of pagan shrines. In the third Dialogue of Sulpicius Severus we hear of a massive temple at Amboise which the local priest, rebuked by S. Martin for his tolerance, declared himself unable to destroy, even were he aided by soldiers, or by the enforced labour of the people.[3]

The Frankish kings were not consistent in this matter ; as a rule they winked at survivals too popular to be decreed out of existence. The bishops never countenanced, but could not eradicate the mischief. Decrees of the second Council of Orleans (533), and of later Councils held in the same city, show how vigorously the cult of idols still flourished.[1] Childebert I, who died in 558, desired his bishops to make an end, but the growth was too luxuriant for their powers of destruction and too elusive for their pursuit.[2] In one part or another of Gaul old superstitions persisted throughout the sixth century; Gregory the Great was aware of their prevalence in Gaul, and in a letter to Queen Brunhild, written in September 597, he begs her to prevent the Austrasians from sacrificing to idols, worshipping trees, and displaying sacrificed heads of animals;[3] they were by no means extirpated in the seventh. The Council of Clichy provides evidence that in 626 Christians were eating with pagans, and even attending their sacrifices.[4] In Austrasia the number of pagans was very large.[5] Gregory relates the destruction by S. Gall of a temple near Cologne containing many idols,[6] and the reluctant demolition by local peasants of a statue of Diana at Carignan (see below). Wulfolaic (S. Walfroy) the Lombard told Gregory that when he first came to the region of Trèves, he found a statue of Diana being worshipped to the accompaniment of songs, drinking, and immorality, on the hill at Yvois-Carignan in the Ardennes, where he afterwards built his church and monastery. Near this statue he set up a column, and stood upon it as a stylite exposed to the weather preaching to the people against idols (VIII. 15). He finally succeeded in converting many pagans, who brought a rope to drag down the huge figure (*simulacrum hoc immensum*) which had resisted his solitary efforts. They failed; but after prayer in the church, Wulfolaic returned to lay hand to the rope. Instantly the statue yielded, fell to the ground, and was beaten to pieces with iron hammers.[1] At Autun, as related in the Passion of S. Symphorian,[2] there was said to have been in the fifth century an image of the Berecynthian mother (Cybele). Following a custom usual in Gaul of dragging pagan images through their fields and vineyards in order to protect them from injury and loss,[3] the people were dragging this figure about when Simplicius came upon them. With a prayer and sign of the cross he caused the image to fall to earth, and the draught animals to stand stock still. The people sacrificed, and beat the animals all to no purpose. It was then agreed that the Berecynthian mother ought to be able to defend her rights, and she was called upon to do so; on her failure, the people accepted Christianity. If the northern parts of Gaul were especially reluctant to abandon heathen beliefs, the south had also its pagan reminiscences. Gregory relates a remarkable story told him by a man of Auvergne, who had been on board a vessel nearly shipwrecked in a storm during her voyage to Italy. All on board invoked supernatural aid, but he found himself almost the only Christian; the majority called upon Jupiter, Mercury, Minerva, and Venus. When he himself invoked S. Nicetius, they seconded his appeal by crying: *Deus Niceti, eripe nos!* [4]

---

[1] Thus Mercury was identified with the Celtic god Lug (Bayet, in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, II. i, p. 17). The Roman gods were kept in memory by the superficial knowledge of certain Roman poets. In II. 20 (29) Clotild, the Christian queen of Clovis, denouncing paganism to her lord, is reported as saying nothing of Wotan, Thor, or Freya ; she confines herself to Jupiter and other deities of the Roman Pantheon ; Gregory even makes her quote from the first book of the *Aeneid*. But though Clotild, a Burgundian, may well have been better educated than Clovis, the classical allusions may be due to the chronicler. For pagan survival see also Dill, as above, pp. 262–3.

[2] It may be noted, however, that other Teutonic tribes preserved ceremonies probably of ancient tribal origin. Thus Gregory the Great mentions a Lombard custom of worshipping and dancing round a goat's head (*Dialogues*, iii. 28).

[3] *Ibid.* 8. Martin himself destroyed many temples, building churches or chapels on their sites. He in fact carried out an iconoclastic campaign in the rural parts of Gaul where paganism was most deeply rooted. Martin was bishop of Tours in 372, and died about 397.

---

[1] F. Maassen, M. G. H., *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, p. 64 (canon 20), p. 76 (canon 11), p. 108 (canon 22).

[2] The *praeceptum* of Childebert, against *idola daemoni dedicata*, unseemly revels at Christmas and Easter, and *dansatrices quae per villas ambulant* is printed in M. G. H., *Legum*, Sect. ii, vol. i (1883), p. 2.

[3] P. Ewald and L. Hartmann, Letters of Gregory in M. G. H., Bk. VIII. 4: *ut idolis non immolent, cultores arborum non existant, de animalium capitibus sacrificia sacrilega non exhibeant.* Cf. note 2 on p. 245.

[4] Maassen, as above, p. 199 (canon 16).

[5] The frontiers of Austrasia approached those of the pagan Saxons and Frisians, the most obstinate adherents of their old gods.

[6] V. P. vi. The Latin word used for a heathen temple is *fanum*. Cf. *Hist.* iv. 48: *post praedicationem sacerdotum de fanis ad ecclesias sunt conversi.*

Gregory gives various glimpses of rural superstition, evidently based upon very ancient custom. Peasants in the territory of Javols, who used to make offerings to a lake, transferred them to the church of S. Hilary when it was built near the spot.[5]

---

[1] *Confractum malleis ferreis in pulverem redigi.* It must therefore have been of stone.

[2] G. C. 76. Autun was also known as *civitas Aeduorum*, from the Gaulish tribe of the Aedui.

[3] Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, ch. ix. Such images were draped in white (*candido tecta velamine*); the ceremony must have borne a resemblance to the old *Ambarvalia*.

[4] V. P. xvii. 3. We may remember that nominal though it may have been, the cult of pagan (Roman) gods lasted throughout the Middle Ages in France, Germany, and the Low Countries (J. Michelet, *La sorcière*, 1862, pp. 35 ff., quoted by G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 179).

[5] G. C. 2: *multitudo rusticorum, quasi libamina lacui illi exhibens, linteamina proiiciebat ac pannos qui ad usum vestimenti virili(s) praebentur; nonnulli lanae vellera, plurimi etiam formas casei ac cerae vel panis diversasque species. . . . Veniebant autem cum plaustris potum cibumque deferentes, mactantes animalia et per triduum aepulantes.*

Some had been in the habit of throwing into the lake pieces of cloth; the greater number had thrown fleece of wool; others figures made of cheese, wax, or bread, and various other things, each according to his means. They used to come in carts with provision of meat and drink, kill animals, and feast for three days. The bishop of Javols failed to put an end to the custom until a church was built.[1] Such practices were not everywhere so easily abolished, for the literature relating to later Merovingian times has many references to like superstitions. The lives of the local saints tell of much paganism in the north in the seventh century.[2] Especially interesting is the mention in the sermon, contained in the Life of S. Éloi, of the worship, in the diocese of Noyon, of Neptune, Orcus, Diana, Hercules, and Minerva;[3] the Life of S. Romanus alludes to temples of Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus in the diocese of Rouen.[4] In addition to the worship of false gods, the sermon denounces all kinds of augury and observance of omens, resort to sorceresses and diviners;[5] wishing at wells, veneration of sacred stones or trees; wearing of phylacteries, even though the writing thereon might be derived from the Scriptures;[6] the enchanting of herbs; the passing of flocks through holes in trees; shouting during eclipses of the moon,[7] and the casting of horoscopes. A ban is laid on the observance of old mummeries and dances associated with pagan festivals, such as disguise as stags or oxen on the Kalends of January, or the invoking of Minerva and other goddesses by women while weaving, or occupied by domestic duties.[8] Long before this time, S. Caesarius of Arles had in like manner denounced mumming as a heathen custom.[1] In addition to the large and more ceremonial acts of superstition, we find all those smaller expressions which have survived in European countries down to our own times.[2] There are yet people, who, like the Franks, start, or refrain from starting, upon a journey if some recognized omen is absent or appears.[3] Quite in accordance with modern custom was the cry of *Mala hora!* (*Malheur*) raised by those present when the axle of the carriage broke as the Princess Rigunth set out upon her long and unhappy journey to Spain (VI. 32 (45)).

---

[1] He rebuked them in these words: *Nolite filioli, peccare ante Deum. Nulla est enim religio in stagno.* When the basilica was built: *homines, compuncti corde, conversi sunt, et relinquentes lacum, omnia quae ibidem proiicere soliti ad sanctam basilicam conferebant.* This being done, annoying storms, which had continually troubled their departure on the fourth day, altogether ceased.

[2] Examples collected by Dom Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article 'Gallicane, Église', cols. 431–2.

[3] *Vita Eligii*, II, ch. xv (in Migne, P. L. lxxxvii, col. 528). S. Éloi incurred the hatred of the people in his diocese of Noyon for his denunciation of local customs, and was even threatened with death as a meddlesome 'Roman'.

[4] *Vita Romani, Acta Sanctorum*: October, vol. x.

[5] Many passages in the History and in Gregory's other works show how constant was the resort to sorcery and witchcraft by all classes.

[6] 'Phylacteries' were not to be suspended at cross-roads, at wells, or from trees.

[7] The sermon mentions the belief that demoniacs are afflicted through the moon.

[8] Women are forbidden to wear amber suspended from their necks.

All such survivals, great and small, among Franks and Gallo-Romans were a constant source of anxiety to the Church, which was driven to compound with many a practice which she could well have wished away. With regard to many old festivals she pursued the usual politic course of tolerating them by transferring them to Christian worship,[4] just as she admitted a few old pagan usages into her law.[5]

The above remarks upon pagan survival may be closed by a reference to Gregory's allusion to the demon of noon,[6] which here appears with a meaning different from that in which it became familiar to the medieval monk.[7] A cleric of Poitiers was cured by S. Martin of lameness caused *per incursum daemonii meridiani*, which demon was called Diana by the country people.[1] A woman, claiming that she had seen a vision portending the destruction of Paris, was mocked on the ground that she was an idle dreamer, or else prompted by the demon of the noonday.[2]

---

[1] *Sermons*, in Migne, P. L. xxxix, cols. 2001, 2003–4; further facts as to survival of paganism similar to those given in the above paragraphs have been collected by Leclercq, in Cabrol, as above.

[2] Cf. G. G. Coulton, *The Mediaeval Village*, p. 270.

[3] In VII. 26 (29) we are told that the Frank made a practice of taking 'auspices' before setting out: *et cum iter ageret, ut consuetudo est barbarorum, auspicia intendere coepit.*

[4] The sagacious Gregory the Great did not fail to see the practical wisdom of this course. He advised Augustine to preserve and re-dedicate pagan temples in England, and to change animal sacrifice into a more innocent form of offering (Bede, *Eccl. Hist.* i. 30).

[5] e.g. ordeal by boiling water or by contact with glowing coals. The widespread custom of swearing innocence before the altar, or before tombs of saints, also partook of the nature of an ordeal. Secular law in the same way admitted ordeal by battle (cf. p. 209). For the Church and the ordeal see below, p. 306, and E. Vacandard in *Études de critique et d'hist. relig.*, 1905.

[6] Ps. xc. 6: *daemonium meridianum.* See note, vol. ii, p. 579.

[7] In the later Middle Ages this name was given to the spirit of temptation coming in the guise of an angel of light (G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, pp. 97, 312). S. Jerome said that Arius started forth 'like the devil at noon'. Cassian more subtly connected this demon with *acedia*, the weariness of self and of all things, which haunts the cloister, more especially at the mid hour of the day.

The belief in witchcraft and magic was so strong and universal that the utmost efforts of the Church availed nothing against it, and here she was forced to do more than wink at certain aspects of superstition. Every one accepted the existence of magic as a matter of course,[3] and Gregory finds no difficulty in believing that Sigibert's defeat by the Huns was due to the magical arts used by that people.[4] One or two examples of sorcery attributed to his own countrymen or neighbours may be noticed. The notorious Guntram Boso persuaded Prince Merovech, at the time in sanctuary with him at the church of S. Martin at Tours, to consult 'a woman having a spirit of divination' as to his prospects of succeeding to the kingdom.[5] Boso himself was always inquiring into his future by the aid of divination, and always mystified by the diviners.[6]

Gregory gives us an interesting picture of a 'pythoness' and her activities. In the diocese of Verdun there lived another wise woman possessed of a spirit of prophecy. She did not practise her art on her own account, but was paid by employers, who drew the profits, giving her, however, a salary, and allowing her to spend lavishly on her personal adornment. She thus went abroad so richly dight that she might have been some popular idol.[1] She was made a freedwoman, and subjected to few restraints. If any robbery occurred, or any injury was done, she would tell, for a fee, the name of the culprit and where he was to be found, who the receiver was, and what he had done with the spoil. The bishop of Verdun summoned her before him and satisfied himself that she was possessed of an unclean spirit. Failing to eject it,[2] he suffered her to depart; whereupon, showing an acute sense of the fitness of things, she prudently went to Queen Fredegund, who naturally became her patroness.

---

[1] V. M. iii. 9.

[2] VIII. 33: *cum a multis irrideretur quod aut sortium praesagio dixerit aut qualiqua somniasset, aut certe demonii meridiani haec instinctu proferret.* Cf. also Ruinart, *Acta Martyrum*, ed. Ratisp., p. 127; Lives of SS. Symphorian and Caesarius of Arles; and Grimm, *Mythologie*, II, ii, p. 114.

[3] Even among the better educated classes in sixth-century Rome, people practised and believed in magic. Two Romans, Basilius and Praetextatus, were ordered by Theodoric to be tried before five senators because they were *magicis artibus involuti, . . . artis sinistrae iamdiu contagione polluti* (Cassiodorus, *Var.* iv. 22, 23).

[4] IV. 22 (29): *isti, magicis artibus instructi, diversas eis fantasias ostendunt, et eos valde superant.* Perhaps the Huns, like the Laplanders in later times, were regarded as endowed with peculiar powers.

[5] V. 8: *mulierem quandam . . . habentem spiritum phitonis* (i.e. pythonis), *ut ei quae erant ventura narraret.* This woman sent Merovech a message that King Chilperic would die within the year, whereupon the prince should obtain the whole kingdom and reign five years; in the sixth year he should be made bishop of a city on the Loire, where he should die, an old man full of days. The vain prince, 'as if he saw himself already on the episcopal throne of Tours', told all to Gregory, who laughed at him for his pains. The same night Gregory had a vision portending the fate of Chilperic and all his sons. Afterwards, when the vision proved true, he felt doubly assured of the falsity of soothsayers: *tunc liquidum cognovi falsa esse quae promiserant arioli.*

[6] IX. 10: *ariolus ac sortis saepius utebatur, ex quibus futura cognoscere cupiens, remansit inlusus.*

In the matter of divination good Christians of Gallo-Roman origin put themselves right with their consciences by taking the issue of lot or chance as an answer given from above, or by some reputed saint; and in this they were followed by many of the Franks, who were delighted to find a way of reconciling old superstition with Christian belief. Who could complain when the Bible itself was the means of augury? S. Patroclus, anxious to know whether he should continue the teaching of boys or whether he might be permitted to withdraw into the wilderness as an eremite, wrote the alternatives on two papers which he placed on the altar. After prayer and vigil lasting three days, he received an indication that he might become a hermit (V. P. ix. 1). Chramn, son of Lothar I, when about to join his uncle Childebert against his father, consulted the oracle of Holy Writ at Dijon. The clergy placed three books, the Prophets, Epistles, and Gospels, upon the altar, offering prayer that the prince might be told whether or not he should succeed his father in the kingdom. The books were then opened in turn, and portended nothing but evil (IV. 11 (16)). Prince Merovech, grown sceptical as to the witch or pythoness (p. 250, n. 5), made trial of such *sortes Biblicae*. He placed the Psalter, the Book of Kings, and the Book of the Gospels on S. Martin's tomb, and kept vigil all night, praying the saint to declare his prospects of succeeding to the kingdom. At the end of three days he opened each of the books at a venture, receiving in each case an ominous reply. Thereupon, after many tears, he quitted the protection of S. Martin to find his last adventures, which included two further months of sanctuary at Auxerre (V. 8). Sometimes, in place of such divination, direct communication with a saint was attempted. Chilperic, wishing to drag Guntram Boso, the slayer of his eldest son, out of sanctuary in the church of S. Martin, sent a deacon named Baudegisil with a letter addressed to the saint, whom he sought to propitiate by setting forth his case. This was placed on the tomb of Martin, together with a piece of clean paper for the saint's reply. After three days, no answer being given, Baudegisil returned to his master (V. 8 (14)).

---

[1] VII. 43 (44): *multum praestabat dominis divinando questum, eoque in gracia profecit ut ab his liberta facta, suis voluntatibus laxaretur. Si quis enim aut furtum aut aliquid male perferret, statim haec, quo fur abiit, cui tradidit, vel quid ex hoc fecerit edicebat. Congregabat cotidie aurum argentumque, procedens in ornamentis ita ut putaretur esse divinum aliquid in populis.*

[2] He tried a formula of exorcism, and anointed her forehead with sacred oil. The unclean spirit cried out and declared its identity, but did not come forth.

To the embarrassment which persistent heathenism caused the Church was added that arising from the fidelity to their ancient faith of the numerous Jews settled in the larger cities. As a rule this people, though sturdily maintaining its old belief, escaped any active molestation by Christian neighbours. Only when the feeling of the Franks and Gallo-Romans was violently aroused by some real or fancied outrage attributed to Hebrew malice would the Jews bow before the storm and give the Church a few converts; the greater number preferred banishment to surrender. But such instances were rare, for there was as yet no systematic persecution; the era of mass-conversion was to come later, though Avitus, bishop of Clermont, received praise from more than one quarter for the conversion of five hundred Jews in his city and the expulsion of the rest.[1] He gave the Jewish community the choice of either becoming Christian or leaving the city, and only a minority accepted the first alternative; the rest withdrew to Marseilles. In 582 King Chilperic undertook an extensive baptism of Jews, himself standing sponsor to one of the converts named Phatyr.[1] Priscus,[2] the king's provider in the matter of precious objects (p. 433, n.), made a half-promise that he would adopt Christianity, accompanying it with a bribe doubtless intended to procure him immunity.[3] Soon afterwards Phatyr, who either had a feud with him, or, as a sincere convert, suspected him of trifling, cut him down as he was proceeding to a Jewish observance.[4]

---

[1] V. 6 (11). An uproar was caused when a Jew poured some foul oil on the head of a convert of his race who was walking in procession, clothed in white baptismal robes. In retaliation the Christians levelled the synagogue with the ground. It was then that Avitus intervened. Fortunatus was moved to celebrate the great conversion in verse (*Carm.* v. 5). In this poem occur the following unmusical lines, addressed to an ideal Jew:

Vis hic nulla premit, quovis te collige liber,
Aut meus esto sequax, aut tuus esto fugax.

In 629 Dagobert, grandson of Chilperic, again resorted to forcible baptism. But, as Pfister remarks (Lavisse, II. i, p. 237), it is probable that such orders were imperfectly executed.

c. Superstition.

Between some superstitions of paganism and the excessive worship of relics as practised in the sixth century it is difficult to discern essential difference. The dividing line is not easily drawn, and we can see that the easiness of the transition must have smoothed the path of many simple converts ; this fact may have presented itself to the minds of the great Churchmen who encouraged and supported this kind of veneration.[5]

Popular religion was a crude and ignorant faith too commonly based upon fear, the hope of material advantage, and the trust in wonder-working relics. The avenging God in whom all believed was hard upon the offender ; the Enemy and his attendant demons fell upon all who stepped aside from the narrow way. Every man's life was a dangerous battle against unseen forces, in which the saints were the great allies of harassed and beset mortality. The saints, indeed, had taken the place of the pagan demigods.[6] The Hercules of Gaul was S. Martin, the great helper at need, and Gregory, as bishop of the diocese containing his celebrated shrine, occupied a most enviable position. The belief in the frequent appearance of saints led to many impostures;[1] the universal demand for their relics prompted unseemly raids, and the possessor of an important member, or single bone, might find his house forcibly invaded (see below, p. 255). The lawful collection of relics was pursued with a systematic activity. S. Radegund, ex-queen of Lothar I, begged a piece of the True Cross preserved at Constantinople; it was sent to her by Justin and his empress, Sophia, and is still at Poitiers in its original enamelled setting.[2] She also sent out a regular mission to Jerusalem and 'the whole region of the East'.[3] Her envoys made the round of the tombs of martyrs and confessors, returning with a rich harvest, which she placed with the cross in a silver coffer[4] in her monastery of Poitiers. The *virtus* of such a source of power was so great that Gregory professed to have himself seen a lamp burning near it overflow, yielding more than a *sestarium*, when its natural capacity allowed for a *quartarium* only.[5] In the same way, pieces from a silk textile in which the relic of the cross had been wrapped worked miraculous cures. In 590, the year in which Gregory the Great was elected pope, the deacon of Gregory of Tours was in Rome on this business of procuring relics. Some of those which he brought back were obtained from the great pope while he was still a regional deacon (X. 1). When a collection of venerated remains was safely brought home, the relics of different saints were tied up in separate packets and kept together in church or oratory.

---

[1] VI. 10 (17).

[2] The king had already attempted to convert this man (VI. 5).

[3] *Ibid.*: *datis muneribus . . . pollicitur dolose se deinceps quae rex iusserat impleturum.* A number of the newly baptized made no secret of their real sentiments: *corpore abluti tantum, non corde, ad ipsam quam prius perfidiam habuerant, Deo mentiti, regressi sunt.*

[4] Phatyr escaped for a while into Guntram's territory, but was soon afterwards murdered in revenge by the relations of Priscus.

[5] Among these were Ambrose and Augustine in the West, Basil and Chrysostom in the East. Pope Gregory the Great encouraged relic-worship with no less zeal than Gregory of Tours (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 277).

[6] Pfister, in Lavisse, *Hist.*, ii, pt. i, p. 241. After S. Martin, S. Julian, S. Denis, and S. Alexander of Lyon were most popular. S. Peter and S. Paul seem to have been the most venerated of non-local saints, and pilgrimages were made to their graves at Rome. For the cult of saints and their relics in Merovingian Gaul see A. Marignan, *Études sur la civ. française*, ii, *Le culte des saints sous les Mérovingiens*, Paris, 1899.

---

[1] In Auvergne a man who declared himself Christ had 3,000 followers. But as a rule we read much more of the saints, especially the local ones, than of Christ.

[2] The cross has been photographed in recent years (W. M. Conway, in *The Antiquaries' Journal*, iii (1922), p. 1). It caused the monastery to be visited by pilgrims: *ad beatae Crucis gloriam*. In the story of the dying nun (VI. 21 (29)), one of those present is a man possessed of a devil, who had come in the hope of being cured by the cross. For the wood of the True Cross in the Christian East see Theophylact, *Hist.* v. 16.

[3] *Ibid.*: *per totam Orientis plagam . . . reliquias detulerunt quas in arca argentea cum ipsa cruce sancta locatas.*

[4] The word used is not *capsa*, the usual term for a small portable box or case for relics, but *arca*, evidently designating some larger receptacle. This *arca* is mentioned in the account of the nuns' riot at Poitiers, when it seems to have been placed in the abbess's own oratory (X. 15).

[5] He had heard of these lamps before as *ebullientes virtute divina*, but now had ocular experience. For lamp-miracles, which were among the most frequent of all, see below, p. 257.

Gregory in the first year of his episcopate placed relics of various saints in his new private oratory at Tours.[1]

A good example of the forcible acquisition of relics is given in VII. 31. The Pretender Gundovald while the guest of Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, sought to provide himself with a relic which should secure his personal safety, especially desiring one of S. Sergius; he had heard that a certain king in the East had routed all his enemies by merely raising his right arm, to which a relic of this saint was attacked. It just happened that Euphronius, a Syrian living in the city, had a casket containing relics of S. Sergius suspended high up on the wall of his private chapel. The ruthless soldier Mummolus, commander of the Pretender's forces, went to the house with Bishop Bertram, and, refusing an offer of two hundred gold pieces to leave the casket where it was, mounted a ladder, took it down from the wall, and hacked a fragment from a finger of the saint for Gundovald's use.

The body of a saint buried in the cathedral or other church in a diocese was regarded as a great and very powerful relic, able to protect the whole region, and especially its clergy. The saint was generally held to perform this duty to the general satisfaction. But if he was considered to have failed, he was plainly informed of the displeasure felt by those who had put their trust in him. In the time of Sigibert, king of Austrasia, one Childeric seized for the royal domain a *villa* belonging to the Church at Aix; he further mulcted Franco, the bishop of the city, in a sum of three hundred pieces of gold.[2] Returning home, the bishop stood before the tomb of his sainted predecessor Mitrias, and announced to him that no psalms would be sung in the church, nor lamps lit, until he had avenged his servants upon their enemies; he then heaped thorns on the tomb, and blocked the church door with other heaps.[3] It was soon learned that Childeric had been smitten with sickness, this lasting for a year. Then the stricken man repented, and sent six hundred pieces of gold to be placed on the tomb, ordering at the same time the restoration of the land. The saint was thus released from the imputation cast on him; but he now showed his power; Childeric had acted too late, and died despite his repentance.

---

[1] V. P. ii. 2. The building was still damp, and Gregory dried the string or thread with which he tied the packets over a fire. He says that the thread from the packet containing relics of S. Illidius fell into the fire, but remained in it without being consumed.

[2] G. C. 70.

[3] This method of blocking access to churches seems to have been long customary in Gaul. Sidonius in his letters (Bk. vii, letter 6) mentions that when Auvergne was overrun by the Visigoths the doors of the desolate churches were blocked up in this way.

A few more typical examples of miracles claimed for relics may be given, chosen from a much larger number mentioned in Gregory's works.

The tunic of S. Vincent, carried round the walls of Saragossa, was held to have saved the city from the besieging armies of Childebert and Lothar I.[1] King Chilperic, about to break a solemn compact entered into between himself and his brothers, protected himself by an advance-guard of relics. They had severally sworn that none of them would enter the city of Paris without the consent of the others. With relics of many saints borne before him, he came into the town fearless of all ill-consequence, kept Easter 'in jocund wise', and had his infant son baptized.[2] Aredius (S. Yrieix), who preserved relics of S. Martin in an oratory, recounted strange expulsions of evil spirits wrought by them.[3] Once when Gregory was crossing the Rhine such a number of people crowded the boat that it was near sinking. It would indeed have sunk, he declared, had he not worn upon his person relics of S. Martin and other saints (VIII. 14). The reader will light upon many such miracles in the History; examples will throng upon him if he peruses the *Glory of the Martyrs, Glory of the Confessors, Lives of the Fathers*, and *Life of S. Martin*.

The direct transmission of miraculous power by the relics was not necessary; the *virtus* might pass into material substances in its close neighbourhood, and these were regarded as conductors. A single drop of water from the tomb of Martin poured into a vessel half full of wine caused the wine to rise to the brim; 'there is no doubt that the power of the blessed Martin was manifest in this' (V. 14 (21)).

---

[1] III. 29. At first the two kings, seeing a great procession going round the walls, thought that the people were working black magic: *putabant eos aliquid agere maleficii.*

[2] VI. 19 (27): *dies Paschae cum multa jocunditate tenuit.*

[3] G. C. 9. He also said that wine from vines planted by Martin had curative properties, as also had wax from candles at the saint's tomb.

Little fragments of the *pallia* covering the altar-tombs of saints, or particles of dust from the surface of the tomb, perhaps even from the floor about it, were eagerly obtained and steeped in water; the decoction was then drunk as a sovereign remedy for almost any disease or hurt.[1] This custom was so exceedingly common, and is so well illustrated in Gregory's works, that a few examples must suffice.

The tombs of saints, their furniture, and railings suffered continual erosion through the pious depredations of the faithful. But living persons with saintly reputations found themselves treated in the same way as their dead predecessors. At the time of the plague in 587, Guntram was venerated as a saint for his piety and generosity. A woman whose son was stricken with a quartan fever came behind the king in a crowd and secretly clipped the border of his mantle. The particle was steeped in water which was then given to the boy to drink (IX. 21). To have too great a reputation for healing powers was in fact a real embarrassment. S. Trojanus, to make a round of his diocese, put on a new outdoor cloak (*amphibolum*);[2] this suffered much damage at the hands of the people, who doubtless steeped their clippings in water as a medicine (G. C. 58). Lamps[3] hanging near the tombs of saints were held to be affected by this neighbourhood, and are very frequently described as possessing miraculous qualities. They were lighted without hands and burned without oil;[4] their oil, instead of being consumed, overflowed. The lamp burning before the tomb of the murdered Queen Galswinth fell to the pavement, but, instead of being broken, penetrated the substance of the floor without taking harm, remaining there embedded, 'the hardness fleeing away before it'.[5] On the birthday of S. Eusebius of Vercelli, men possessed of devils whirled and danced about in his church, holding on high some of the lamps used to light the building, and breaking them by blows. The oil pouring out, the evil spirits left them, and the people estimated the number of energumens cured by the number of lamps broken.[1]

---

[1] The *potio de pulvere sepulchri* was perhaps the best known panacea of the Dark Ages.

[2] *Vestis villosa*: Ducange.

[3] The oil of lamps used for certain occasions was solemnly blessed; cf. A. Wilmart, in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Germain de Paris (Lettres attribuées à Saint)', cols. 1091–2.

[4] Similar stories occur in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (e. g. iii. 1, § 5, 3, § 30).

[5] IV. 21 (28): *in pavimentum conruit, et fugientem ante eam duriciam pavimenti, tamquam in aliquid molle aelimentum discendit, atque medius est suffussus nec omnino contritus.*

A large class of miracles consisted of supposed interferences with laws of nature, manifested in abnormal action of animals supernaturally directed, or in a similar movement of inanimate things. These interferences might be direct, without visible mediation, or effected through the medium of some sacred object transmitting the miraculous power. One of the best-known examples is that of the hind which appeared when Clovis in his march against the Visigoths was delayed through failure to find the ford over a river; the hind walked across in the sight of all by a hidden ford, and the army followed (II. 27 (37)). In the same campaign, the champion of orthodoxy had only to look at the walls of Angoulême, and they collapsed at his gaze like the walls of Jericho (II. 27 (37)). Natural law was revoked on less notable occasions for the confusion of Arians. The tale of the Vandal Arian bishop recounted in II. 3 is repeated, in substantially the same form, of a Visigothic Arian bishop in another work of Gregory.[2] Gunthar, bishop of Tours (552--5), a former abbot of S. Venantius, riding abroad, omitted to offer prayer as he passed an oratory where S. Martin used to pray. His horse stopped dead like a thing of bronze (*sicut aeneus*), and refused to move till Gunthar alighted and repaired the omission (G. C. 8). Maximus, a disciple of Martin, is declared by Gregory to have escaped drowning in the Saône because he had with him a book of the Gospels and a small chalice and paten.[3]

The irregular rising of the water in the springs at Osset or Osser, near Seville, was regarded as supernatural, especially at the time of Easter. Gregory appeals to the evidence of these wells as confirming the Gallican determination of Easter against that of the Church elsewhere (V. 11 (17)). He expresses his satisfaction that the rising occurred ‘ on our day ’, not on that of those adopting another date. There were similar miraculous springs at Embrun (G. C. 68).

---

[1] I. G. C. 3: *inergumini tamen rotatu valido per totam ecclesiam debacchantes*, &c.

[2] G. C. 13. In this passage we read of a Catholic who throws his ring into the fire, and dares an Arian to pluck it out. The Arian will not even try; the Catholic succeeds without harm. It will be remembered that the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great contain like stories of miracles performed to confound the Arian.

[3] G. C. 22: *Evangeliorum librum* (*et*) *ministerium cotidianum, id est patenulam parvam cum calice*. This passage provides early evidence, for the use of the portable altar-service, resembling the 'chapelle' of latter medieval times.

It was a very widespread belief that the bodies of holy persons remained uncorrupted in their tombs for an indefinite time. Gregory records several cases, as do Bede and other ecclesiastical writers.

II

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

a. Territorial Divisions: Provinces, dioceses, parishes.

ABOVE the low structures of Merovingian society the Church rose as the mass of a great ecclesiastical building dominates a straggling town. It stood as a symbol of order and stability, the one fabric claiming foundation upon the rock, the one institution to which all men looked for support when other props of civilization seemed to be giving way around them. The great building itself had many a weak place; it seemed at times itself to be threatened with ruin. It will be well to consider its construction and the state of its repair in the light of the facts supplied by Gregory of Tours.

For the purposes of administration the Church in Gaul sought to retain as far as possible the old territorial divisions of the Roman Empire. Her dioceses in general corresponded with the regions of the *Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Galliae*, though modifications were rendered necessary by political events, or changing local needs. Theoretically, each of the old *civitates* had its bishop. But in course of time new sees were created; a few of the old were merged in the new, others were divided. S. Remi created a new diocese of Laon, Nevers was another new creation. Uzès, Agde, and Maguelonne were carved out of the diocese of Nîmes, Carcassonne out of Narbonne. The attempt was sometimes made to create new dioceses against the wishes of the Church when fresh partitions of Gaul between the kings carried a political frontier across a diocese. When this happened, the king receiving the part which did not contain the episcopal city was sometimes tempted to erect his share into a new diocese. Thus Sigibert established a diocese of Châteaudun,[1] to which the bishop of Chartres formally objected; after Sigibert's death, it was abolished by a Council held at Paris. When Childebert I determined to found a new see of Melun, the bishop of Sens threatened to appeal to the pope.[1] The position was different when an old diocese was divided by a 'foreign' frontier. Septimania, an integral part of old Gaul, remained in the hands of the Visigoths throughout the Merovingian age, and for a great part of the time its sees were under Arian control. In this case the orthodox Gallican Church did not oppose readjustment. Thus Toulouse, originally in the province of the metropolitan of Nîmes, was not so left when the Franks took it from the Visigoths in 508, for Nîmes was an Arian see under the political control of the Visigothic kingdom; it was, therefore, united with the province of Bourges. The see of Alais, also subordinate to Nîmes, was treated in a similar way. In 538 King Theudebert detached Uzès from Narbonne, which, like Nîmes, was in Visigothic territory, transferring it to Arles, recently ceded to the Franks by the Ostrogothic King Witigis.[2] Dioceses which passed under Frankish dominion were forbidden to continue relations with their old metropolitan sees if the latter were on the wrong side of a political frontier.

---

[1] Promotus, bishop of the see, appealed to Guntram against its abolition. But the king supported the blunt claim of Pappolen, bishop of Chartres: 'The see is mine' (VII. 17).

In the second half of the sixth century there were eleven metropolitans and a hundred and eighteen suffragan bishops.[3] The following were the eleven provinces, and the more important dioceses in each.

The first province to be mentioned is that of Arles, the metropolitan of which enjoyed a kind of honorary primacy in Gaul;[4] under him were the dioceses of Provence, Orange, Avignon, Marseilles, Aix, and twenty others. The metropolitan of Lyons, whose province corresponded in the main to the Roman Lugdunensis Prima, had under him Autun, Langres, Chalon-sur-Saône, Besançon, and Mâcon, with five sees in the territory of the modern Switzerland. He was thus the head of the Church in the Merovingian kingdom of Burgundy. The province of Vienne was also Burgundian. It agreed in the main with the Roman Viennensis, and included among its sees

---

[1] Bouquet, *Rec. des hist. des Gaules*, iv, p. 60.

[2] E. Loening, *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, ii, p. 121.

[3] For the Gallican provinces see the *Gallia Christiana* of the Benedictines of S. Maur; and Longnon, *Géogr. de la Gaule au VIe siècle*, pp. 180 ff. The reader may also consult with advantage Dom Leclercq's summary in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', §§ xxxvii ff.

[4] Cf. pp. 269 ff., below.

Grenoble, Valence, and Geneva. The province of the metropolitan of Rouen, corresponding to Lugdunensis Secunda, included the dioceses of Bayeux, Avranches, Évreux, Séez, Lisieux, and Coutances. It was essentially Neustrian, corresponding in the main to the later Normandy. The territory of the province of Tours represented the Roman Tertia Lugdunensis. It comprised Le Mans, Rennes, Angers, Nantes, and four other sees. Lying chiefly north of the Loire, it extended to the Breton marches. After the death of Charibert, its political allegiance was divided between his three brothers: Sigibert of Austrasia, Guntram of Burgundy, and Chilperic of Neustria. Tours fell to Sigibert, Nantes to Burgundy, and the remaining sees to Neustria. But after the murder of Sigibert, Tours was seized by Chilperic and wrongfully held by him until his own death. After that event, it should by rights have reverted to Austrasia; but Guntram, as guardian of his young nephew Childebert II, long kept it under his own control.[1] The province of Sens, embracing the dioceses of Chartres, Auxerre, Troyes, Orleans, Paris, Meaux, and Nevers, corresponded to another division of the Roman Lugdunensis. Here the arbitrary partition of Gaul between the Merovingian kings again gave rise to complications. The greater part of the province owed allegiance to the kingdom of Burgundy, but Meaux was in Austrasia; the dioceses of Chartres and Paris were both divided. The province of Trèves, partly corresponding to Belgica Prima, included Mayence, Verdun, Cologne, Strasbourg, Worms, Tongres, and other dioceses; it had the advantage of undivided allegiance, lying wholly in Austrasian territory. Belgica Secunda was represented by the province of the metropolitan of Reims, under whom were the bishops of Soissons, Châlons-sur-Marne, Noyon, Arras, Cambrai, Tournai, Senlis, Beauvais, Amiens, and four others. Here again the political allegiance was single, the whole province being Neustrian.

The province of Bourges, the Roman Aquitania Prima, included Clermont, Rodez, Albi, Cahors, Limoges, Toulouse, and three others; its allegiance was to Austrasia. The metropolitan of Bordeaux had a large province corresponding to Aquitania Secunda and Novempopulana. Among its numerous dioceses were those of Agen, Angoulême, Saintes, Poitiers, Périgueux, Eauze, Dax, Bigorra, and nine others. The diocese was originally contained in the kingdom of Charibert; it corresponded to the old diocese of Tarbes; the cathedral city, however, was probably not Tarbes but Cieutat. The province of Narbonne, agreeing in general with the Roman Narbonensis, was never Frankish in the sixth century. It was the Septimanian province, and for the reasons above stated, as bishops did not attend any Councils but those convened by the Visigothic kings.[1] It embraced Agde, Béziers, Nîmes, Carcassonne, and three other dioceses.

---

[1] We may note the curious fact that for two years the see of Tours was held by two bishops conjointly. Clotild, queen of Clovis, thus provided for two Burgundian bishops, named Theodore and Proculus, who had accompanied her into Gaul (X. 31).

The confusion between ecclesiastical and political boundaries revealed by the above facts suggests one reason for the decay of provincial councils; where provinces were shared between different kingdoms, the jealousy of the kings opposed the meeting of their bishops with others not living under their control (p. 301).

The units forming the diocese were the parishes, as to the government of which something is said below, in the paragraphs relating to the clergy concerned with their administration.[2] The country parish grew up in Gaul from the latter part of the fourth century.[3] At first parishes were served by clergy from the cities, and the bishop controlled all property given to them, but by degrees they passed out of this state of tutelage, and by the beginning of the seventh century had attained a position of some independence.[4] Small churches were built on important rural domains, or in settlements at important points on roads where houses congregated. The relation of the parish to the diocese was naturally affected by any dispute as to the proper boundaries of the former. A group of parishes might find itself attached to a new centre by such alterations in dioceses as those mentioned above. Or changes might be brought about by a disagreement between two sees ending in an award by the metropolitan and his provincials in council, as in the case of the dispute between the bishops of Rodez and Cahors (VI. *38*).

---

[1] Longnon, p. 608.

[2] There is a certain confusion in the terminology employed. The word *diocesis* is often used with the sense of parish; in the same way *parochia* sometimes has the wider sense of diocese (cf. Ducange, s.v.).

[3] P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les paroisses rurales du IVe au IXe siècle*, Paris, 1900; A. Marignan, *Études sur la civ. française*, i, p. 202. For parish clergy see also H. Netzer, *La condition des curés ruraux du Ve au VIIIe siècle*, in *Mélanges d'hist. du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferd. Lot* (1926), pp. 575 ff.

[4] This is shown by the sixth canon of the Council of Paris held in that year (Maassen, in M. G. H. *Concil. Merov. aevi*, p. 187).

b. The Hierarchy and Discipline.

As the Merovingian period advanced, episcopal influence increased; the martial reign of Clovis was succeeded by times in which the civil gained upon the military power, and the bishops, through their education and their recognized judicial functions, were called upon to take an active part in public affairs. They had a moral authority which commanded general respect, and the kings increased their powers in order to command their indispensable support. Bishops were often of high birth, belonging to the old Gallo-Roman 'senatorial' families. Gregory himself came of such a stock; he mentions that of the bishops of Tours down to his time only five were not of his family.[1]

Men of this stamp, with the prestige of birth, Roman culture, and often of wealth, proved the best protectors of the people. But it need not be supposed that all bishops were of aristocratic descent: Leo, thirteenth bishop of Tours, began life as a carpenter (X. 31), Mitrias of Aix, as a serf (G. C. 70: *conditione servus*). As in most cases their influence was really used in the cause of humanity, they had the confidence of the people in a manner impossible to the counts, the justice of whose decisions they frequently arraigned.[2] A bishop of unsullied repute could carry matters with a high hand even against the king, as when Nicetius of Trèves refused to say mass before King Theuderic because of his offences; or when Germanus of Paris excommunicated King Charibert for marrying a nun. The Austrasian bishops boldly rebuked King Childebert II for infringing their rights, and imprisoning the traitor Bishop Egidius before he had been tried by the episcopal council. Nor should we overlook the impressiveness of their public appearances, especially in ceremonies and in high services of the Church. When the bishop took part in such scenes, wearing his rich vestments, or when he rode in procession, accompanied by priests and escorted by a great company of people, his state must have been more than that of the great laymen, and must have rivalled even that of kings.[1] Episcopal majesty was further enhanced by the fact that when it came to a real trial of strength, a resolute bishop could more often intimidate a king than a king a bishop ; the kings, who stood in awe of no laymen, were generally afraid of churchmen, treating them as a rule with a respect shown to no other class, not even the most powerful members of the Teutonic aristocracy.[2] The power of excommunication possessed by the bishops filled the royal heart with a secret fear, and they were not slow to proclaim its effect upon the rash transgressor. Those who wrong bishops, says Gregory, are supernaturally punished. Witness the case of Nanthinus, the wicked count of Angoulême, who had outrageously treated the Bishop Heraclius. This man gave up his miserable soul, crying : ‘ Woe is me ! I am burned by Heraclius the bishop, by him am I tormented, by him am I called to the Judgement! I confess my sin, I remember my unjust offences against him; I implore that death may come to me that I be no longer afflicted by this torture.' He then gave up the ghost, but even before death his body turned black as if he had been put upon the fire. 'Therefore', the writer concludes, 'let all men be amazed, let them marvel, and for ever fear to wrong bishops. For God is the avenger of His servants who place their hope in Him.'[1]

---

[1] The people of the *civitas*, aware of the advantage accruing from such a connexion, were not averse from keeping the see in the occupation of a well-known and tried family. This practice approved itself so well in the fifth century, when Visigoths held Central and Southern Gaul, that it remained popular when they were displaced by the Franks. The Gallo-Roman *minor populus* owed a deep debt to its aristocratic bishops, who alone were able to impress, and even daunt, the barbaric kings.

[2] The more saintly were regarded as the agents of the divine power, able to quench conflagrations, divert the course of thunderstorms, or arrest the plague.

---

[1] Though the private life of the bishop was often of the simplest, the dignity of his public position was well maintained from the time of his enthronement to that of his burial. For the cortège of a bishop cf. A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 207. Gallican bishops seem to have been enthroned on seats of some splendour. When the deacon of Gregory of Tours returned from Rome after witnessing the election of Gregory the Great (X. 1), he brought back a new gilded chair or throne for such use (see the Benedictine Life of Gregory the Great, iii. 3, 8, and cf. W. Bright, *Early English Church History*, p. 242).

[2] Unless one of the kings was enraged to the point of forgetting his fears, the person of a bishop was sacrosanct ; he was safe from the summary execution, the torture, and the mutilation to which the highest laymen were exposed. He could only be tried by his peers in council, and the worst sentences passed by his peers were temporary excommunication, deprivation, and banishment to some remote spot. Even Egidius of Reims, who confessed his rank treason, escaped the king's vengeance (X. 19), whereas, if he had been a layman, he would probably have died the death. If, when a bishop was being tried, lay witnesses were called against him, their evidence could be disallowed, as in the case when Gregory was himself arraigned on the charge of slandering Queen Fredegund ; the council refused to hear witnesses whom King Chilperic had in readiness, on the ground that they could not be believed against a bishop (*cunctis dicentibus : Non potest persona inferior super sacerdotem credi* : V. 49). The king gave way, and all that Gregory had to do was to clear himself by oath and to say masses at three altars.

Persons who could thus protect themselves, yet had an active sympathy with the poor, were really tribunes of the people. The bishops not only strove to save the poor man from ill-treatment, they sought also to reduce the burden of taxation.[2] If a prelate was so fortunate as to have in his city a church containing the tomb of a famous saint to which privileges were attached, he might be able to insist on their immunity. Thus Gregory, as bishop of Tours, appealed to an earlier right of exemption for that city granted because it possessed the celebrated wonder-working tomb of S. Martin; he succeeded in obtaining the withdrawal of Chilperic's tax-collectors. On another occasion he protected men of fighting age from punishment for disobeying the royal ban. And if hostile forces invaded or ravaged the territory of Tours they would always fear that the prayer of the bishop might bring S. Martin into the field against them. If, on one side of his activities, the bishop resembled a tribune of the people, on another he resembled an aedile. Such public works as were carried out in that age were often executed at his suggestion and out of the funds which he controlled. Sidonius of Mayence embanked the Rhine; Felix of Nantes corrected the course of the Loire;[3] Desiderius of Cahors built aqueducts.[4] As Theodoric the Great had observed, enterprise of this kind was peculiarly a bishop's task. In a letter written in the first decade of the sixth century to Bishop Hemilianus, he bade him follow the example of Moses, and complete an aqueduct for the benefit of his people: *Nam quid aptius quam ut sitienti plebi provideat aquas sanctissimus sacerdos?*[1] The property which enabled the bishop to undertake the functions of the aedile was derived from donations of land and treasure by kings, rich churchmen and laymen, and was made inalienable by the canons of episcopal councils; it was sometimes increased by the permission granted the Church to levy dues in specified places; it is noted elsewhere that a fourth part of Church revenue was set apart for the relief of the poor (p. 314). Again, in an age where governments ignored education, almost all the teaching that was to be had was imparted by the Church and directed by the bishops. This service, however, cannot have been a great financial burden. It is natural that men on whom devolved duties so varied and so numerous should have often given proof of sound common sense. By this quality a few of them got down Wulfolaïc (S. Walfroy) from the column where he was vainly playing the stylite in a climate ill adapted to such a form of asceticism (VIII. 15), and saw to it that he did not ascend again.

---

[1] V. 36: *Non exanimem corpus ita nigredinem duxit, ut putares eum prunis superpositum fuisse combustum. Ergo omnes haec obstupescant, admirentur et metuant, ne inferant iniurias sacerdotibus. Quia ultor est Dominus servorum suorum sperantibus in se.* The immunity of bishops was no longer so secure in the seventh century. Queen Brunhild was accused of having caused Bishop Desiderius of Vienne to be stoned; Ebroin, Mayor of the Palace in Neustria, sent executioners to put the bishop of Lyons to death. In 664 Sigebrand, bishop of Paris, was slain for being an adherent of the queen regent, Baldhild. Bede (*Hist. Eccl.* v. 19) ascribes the murder of the bishop of Lyons to this queen, apparently without good reason.

[2] The Church enjoyed certain exemptions from customs dues and market taxes (Pfister in C. M. H. ii, p. 144).

[3] Fortunatus (*Carm.* iii. 10).

[4] Pfister, as above, p. 149.

We gather from such facts as the above that the bishops were really important agents in the government of the country. They spared the kings much trouble in administering their territories, and saved the royal treasuries great sums. When, therefore, the kings made donations to the Church, they contributed perhaps on too low a scale to an organization which did much work that they should themselves have carried out through their own officers. Had the activities of the Church been suddenly extinguished in the Gaul of the sixth century, the lawlessness which already threatened the foundations of social life would have been freed from the sole permanent restraining force; the country would have sunk into irremediable anarchy. The better kings knew this well, and proportionally valued the work of their bishops, in whom they had not only auxiliary judges, legislators, and teachers, but also the best diplomats of the age. When they had to negotiate

[1] Cassiodorus, *Var.* iii, Letter 31. Doubtless Cassiodorus himself suggested this similitude to his royal master; it is quite after his manner.

with their royal brothers, they generally sent a bishop among their envoys.[1] They knew that he was better taught and better versed in the honest conduct of affairs; they knew further that he was by instinct and profession a follower after peace.[2] A Guntram, a Sigibert, a Childebert would never have denied that their bishops were essential pillars of their states. The testy Guntram, in a moment of provocation, might order the bishop of Verdun's house to be fired and burned down, bishop and all (IX. 10), but it was well understood that he did not mean what he said. In short, the bishops were invaluable members of a community poor in valuable men. It was no wonder that the *wergeld* to be paid for the slaying of one among them was half as high again as in the case of a courtier in the immediate intimacy of the king (p. 208). Guizot did not exaggerate when he said that the bishops exerted the only moral force which survived amid the ruins of the old society.[3]

The Gallican bishops of Merovingian times had equal rights over against each other. Except in so far as personal prestige conferred an unofficial influence, the metropolitans had only a certain precedence in dignity, but little more power in council than their suffragans. The Councils of Nicaea and Antioch had decreed that, within his province, the bishop of the metropolitan see should enjoy a precedence implying certain rights.[4] This Eastern system had been in a general sense adopted in Gaul,[5] and in the fifth century the administrative and ecclesiastical provinces practically coincided. Had the imperial system endured, the nominal authority conceded to the metropolitan might have become effectual; but the fall of the empire in the West deprived the provincial organization of its essential support. Under the Merovingian kings the dignity of the metropolitan survived, like the province which gave it birth, but it conferred more consideration than power. Though the metropolitan had little effective control over the bishops of his province, yet by virtue of the few functions remaining to him he was treated with deference, and it was often a pious aspiration of episcopal councils that his authority should to some extent be restored at the expense of that of the king.[1]

---

[1] Gregory himself was sent by Childebert on diplomatic missions (e.g. IX. 20); on this occasion another bishop, Felix, was his co-envoy. Guntram employed the bishops of Orleans and Le Mans to visit the Bretons (IX. 18). Bishop Elafius was sent by Brunhild to Spain (V. 40). Gunthar, seventeenth bishop of Tours, had been a frequent messenger between the kings before he was elected to the see (*saepius legationes inter reges Francorum faciens*: X. 31).

[2] There were exceptions, among which Egidius of Reims was the chief (V. 12 (18); VI. 3; 22 (31); VII. 14, where Guntram turns upon this unwelcome envoy, and trounces him in vigorous speech).

[3] Introduction to his translation of the History (1823), p. xiv. He goes on, however, to say that the moral magistracy of the bishops was the most perilous to the holders; in view of the fear which they inspired, this appears a doubtful statement.

[4] Mansi, *Concil. ampliss. coll.* ii, cols. 669–71, and 1312.

[5] Leclercq in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, s.v. 'Gallicane, Église', § xlvii. Canon 2 of the Council of Turin in 417 recognizes the principle in relation to the rivalry between the bishops of Vienne and Arles, each of whom claimed to be metropolitan of the Viennoise, the first on the ground of previous usage, the second because his city had been made the seat of the Prefecture recently (413) removed from Trèves.

The above pages may be completed by a reference to the relations existing in Merovingian times between the Gallican bishops and the pope.

The Church in Gaul was not a complete hierarchy; the pyramid remained without its apex through the failure to recognize papal supremacy. In practice, the pyramid was truncated at the episcopal level. If their collective judgement decided on a particular course, they referred the matter no further; they did not ask or accept advice from any higher ecclesiastical authority.[2]

The bishops of Rome had claimed no control over the Gallican Church until the beginning of the fifth century.[3] In 417 Pope Zosimus made the bishop of Arles the intermediary between Rome and the bishops of Gaul because the imperial administration had been recently withdrawn from Trèves to that city.[1] But there was no effective primacy over the whole country, and in a few years such claims as Arles possessed were ignored or half forgotten. A disagreement between Pope Leo and S. Hilary of Arles, towards the middle of the fifth century, led to a withdrawal of all privileges, though after Hilary's death in 449 a few were restored. Leo conducted his correspondence with Gallican bishops through Hilary's successor, Ravennius; but there was a long rivalry with the see of Vienne. Under Hilary, successor of Leo, the dignity of Arles was increased; its bishop was definitely regarded as the representative of Rome.[2] But in 476 the city fell into the hands of the Arian Visigoths, and questions of precedence passed into the background; the territory of Gaul was divided between different barbaric peoples, of whom the Visigoths were the chief.

---

[1] The metropolitan still consecrated new bishops and convoked provincial Councils (Loening, *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, 1878, i. pp. 362 ff.) The title of archbishop only dates from the ninth century (M. Prou, *La Gaule mérov.*, p. 122).

[2] It may be noted that the bishops were commonly referred to as holding 'apostolic sees'. The phrase is used in a letter of Clovis, written 507–11: *Dominis sanctis et apostolica sede dignissimis episcopis* (M. G. H., *Legum*, Sect. ii, vol. i (1883), ed. A. Boretius, p. 1). The same words are used in Radegund's letter in IX. 42, and in the letter of the bishops written in 589 (IX. 41). Fortunatus (*Lib.* v. 4) addresses his letter to Syagrius, bishop of Autun: *Domino Sancto et apostolica sede dignissimo domno Syagrio papae*, the title *papa* being also applied to bishops who were not even metropolitans. The phrase *apostolica sedes* was, therefore, commonly applied to ordinary sees.

[3] The Council of Sardica (343), by decreeing that a bishop condemned by a provincial council might appeal to the pope for a new trial, implied an exceptional position accorded to the pope, but its decrees had no special application to Gaul. A rescript of the Emperor Gratian was to the same effect, and Valentinian III gave the pope authority over all Western bishops, ordering secular officials to carry out his decisions. But these imperial rescripts were not canonical and had no validity after the fall of the empire.

The triumph of Clovis brought political unity,[3] but increased the obstacles to centralized ecclesiastical authority. The Frankish king regarded it as his prerogative not only to treat the bishops almost as his own administrators, but even to interfere in religious questions. The assertion of royal power reduced the papal authority in Gaul to a shadow. The pope retained a certain prestige, and was nominally admitted to have certain powers, but in practice these were everywhere restricted. The divisions of Gaul under the sons and grandsons of the conqueror did not improve the prospects of the papacy. The popes had to content themselves with the recognition accorded them by the inclusion, in the collections of canons decreed by episcopal councils, of papal decretals affirming the rights of Rome. There was thus no fully centralized power in the Church during the sixth century; as successor of S. Peter, the bishop of Rome was conceded a position of pre-eminence from which he derived prestige rather than real authority abroad. In Gaul the bishops enjoyed almost monarchical power over their dioceses,[1] and unity of doctrine was preserved by their meeting in frequent councils, either regional or general.[2] The pope could exhort to the better observance of ecclesiastical law ; he could rarely interfere in Gallican Church affairs unless invited to do so by a Frankish king.[3] But there were cases during the course of the sixth century in which bishops excommunicated by Gallican councils appealed to him as a last resort (V. 20), on which occasions his judgement was accepted by the Frankish king concerned.[4] Interesting in this connexion is the ironical question of King Charibert to the priest Heraclius, who brought him a greeting from the bishop of Bordeaux, and described that see as *sedes apostolica* : 'Hast thou then visited Rome, bringing us greeting from its pope (*papa*) ?' (IV. 19 (26)). The episode suggests that about the middle of the sixth century the *papa Romae* was at any rate acknowledged to occupy a position of exceptional honour. On one occasion, instead of a Gallican bishop appealing to the pope, we have the contrary event. In 581 Pelagius appealed to Aunachar, bishop of Auxerre, bewailing his troubles with the Lombards.[5]

---

[1] L. Duchesne, 'La primatie d'Arles', in *Mém. de la Soc. Nat. des Antiquaires de France*, 1891–2, pp. 155 ff. At an earlier period S. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, had recognized that Rome, more than any other city, possessed the apostolic tradition, and therefore that its bishop was entitled to special respect.

[2] One of the duties of the bishop of Arles was to issue the letters of recommendation (*litterae formatae*) without which no cleric could travel beyond the limits of the diocese to which he belonged. In 514 Symmachus gave Caesarius, bishop of Arles, a general direction to supervise the Church in Gaul.

[3] Except as regards the territory of Septimania, still held by the Visigoths in the south.

The election to the papacy of Gregory the Great in 590, a few years before the death of his namesake of Tours, introduced a temporary change. The correspondence of the great pope shows him intervening in questions of importance, but always through the king, while Frankish bishops voluntarily seek his advice or sanction. The vicariate of Arles again became something more than a traditional title. In 595 Vigilius of that see wrote to Gregory the Great asking for the *pallium*,[6] a request in which he was supported by his king, Childebert II. The pope granted the request,[1] writing also to the king to tell him that the bishop of Arles was constituted papal vicar in his dominions.[2] When Gregory sent Augustine's mission to Britain he recommended it to the bishop of Arles, to whom indeed the first English bishops were for a time subordinated.[3] He at the same time begged the good offices of Queen Brunhild and Childebert her son, on whom he also urged their duty to the Church.[4] But Gregory the Great stands alone in his assertion of Roman right in Gaul; there was no pope for a long time before or after him whose voice was heard beyond the Alps with so much respect. After his death, Rome was weakened by many causes; in Gaul strong aristocratic factions shook the power of the throne, and with it that of the Church. Not till Carolingian times did the relations of Frankish rulers to Rome admit recognition of the ancient claim;[5] even in Carolingian times the Gallican bishops showed great independence, as on the occasion when they resented the appearance of Gregory IV in Gaul in 833, just before the deposition of Louis the Pious. They notified the pope that he had no right to interfere in their dioceses, and that if he came to excommunicate, he should return excommunicated himself. It is clear that what the prelates wanted was not monarchy in the Church, but an aristocracy of bishops.

---

[1] The bishops of Lyons, Paris, Bordeaux, and Tours enjoyed a special prestige.

[2] Fustel de Coulanges, *Hist. des inst. politiques de l'ancienne France*, iii, *La monarchie franque*, p. 522.

[3] E. Loening, *Gesch. des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, ii, 1878, pp. 63, 69, 86.

[4] This was the case of the notorious bishops Salonius and Sagittarius, who after excommunication by an episcopal council, went to Rome and made a successful appeal for reinstatement : *Accedentes coram papa Johanne exponunt se nullius rationis existentibus causis dimotos. Ille vero ad regem epistolas dirigit in quibus locis suis eosdem restitui iubet* (V. 20). Guntram did as the pope desired ; and the bishops whose decree was cancelled appear to have made no sign. The case of Egidius, bishop of Reims (X. 19), was not brought before the pope, though it seems one of those which might well have been submitted to his decision.

[5] Pelagius, *Ep.* iv. in Labbe, *Concilia*, v, pp. 939, 940.

[6] The *pallium* in Pope Gregory's time was not yet the mark of the metropolitan (cf. A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 210). It was given by special favour of the pope, who usually asked the emperor's consent : Gregory did this before

The Clergy (*clerici*, clerics, clerks)[6] were divided into two

---

conferring it on the bishop of Autun (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 436).

[1] Ewald and Hartmann's edition of Pope Gregory's Letters in M. G. H., v. 58. In the same letter is also mention of papal vicars at Salonika, Uskub (Justiniana Prima), and Syracuse. The pope chose, if possible, as his representative, the bishop of the city.

[2] *Ibid.* v. 60. But Gregory disclaimed any pretension to the title of universal bishop (*Ep.* iv. 32). It was because of this that when he wished to influence affairs in Gaul he wrote to the ruler of the kingdom with which he was concerned; thus his wishes were indirectly made known.

[3] Cf. Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* i. 27, 28; iv. 1.

[4] *Ep.* ix. 213.

[5] The position of the papacy with regard to Merovingian France is summarized by Dom Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch chrétienne*, s. v. 'Gallicane, Église', fasc. lvii, 1924, cols. 433 ff. Among the books cited by him are the well-known works of Fustel de Coulanges, Loening, and A. Hauck; among special articles those by M. Vaes, 'La papauté et l'Église franque à l'époque de Grégoire le Grand', in *Rev. d'hist. ecclésiastique*, vi, 1905; H. Grisar, 'Rom und die fränkische kirche im 6tn Jahrhundert', in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, xiv, 1890, pp. 447 ff., and an article in *Analecta romana*, i, pp. 333 ff., Rome, 1899.

[6] Isidore of Seville, *Origines*, VII, ch. xii, gives a full list of the clerical grades.

groups, those in holy orders, and those not, the former group naturally being the higher. In this group the bishops held the highest rank; next came the priests (*presbyteri*), followed by the deacons and subdeacons. The second group consisted of the acolytes, exorcists, *lectores*,[1] and *ostiarii*, or door-keepers; all these were later classed together as clerks in minor orders. The *lectores* entered the service of the Church as boys and were trained in singing; they might qualify as subdeacons at the age of twenty.[2] The regular passage of a cleric through the higher orders is well illustrated by the case of Cato, the ambitious priest of Clermont, who was thwarted of the bishopric after the death of Gallus by the archdeacon of the diocese (p. 298). Cato having attained the several grades in their prescribed succession, passing the requisite number of years in each,[3] put forward the claim that as a religious man, practising abstinence and charity, and regular in singing all the nocturnal offices, he had a claim on the bishopric, as it were by canonical sanction, this being the natural crown of his career. Offered the see of Tours, in place of that of Clermont, which alone he desired, he expressed his intention of obtaining his original object in strict accordance with the laws of the Church.[4]

Every candidate for the higher orders was supposed to be able to read and know the Psalms,[5] but in the sixth century ignorance was on the increase, and the number of learned priests must have been few; we hear of no priest equal in

---

In another passage Gregory alludes to one of his servants as a cleric (V. M. iv. 9: *duo de pueris nostris, clericus scilicet Dagobaldus et laïcus Theodorus*).

[1] The Council of Sardis (canon 13) decreed that no man might become a bishop who had not passed through the degrees of *lector*, *deacon*, and *priest*: it therefore recognized one of the lower clerical degrees as essential, even though it did not admit to holy orders. Cf. the case of Cato, below.

[2] S. Caesarius became a *lector* at the age of seven. The *lectores* attached to the larger churches in the cities formed a large group (A. Marignan, as above, p. 189).

[3] IV. 6: *Lector enim decem annis fui, subdiaconatus officium quinque annis ministravi, diaconatui vero quindecim annis mancipatus fui, presbiterii, inquam honorem viginti annis potior. Quid enim mihi nunc restat, nisi ut episcopatum, quem fidelis servitus promeretur, accipiam?* Favoured persons were allowed to pass all these grades in a single year.

[4] *Vos igitur revertimini ad civitates vestras, et si quid utilitati vestrae competit, exercete; nam ego canonice adsumturus sum hunc honorem.* The bishops were helpless; they could but depart, 'execrating his vainglory' (*ibid.*).

[5] In Italy Gregory the Great insisted on examination, and the archdeacon of Ravenna was ploughed as a candidate for a bishopric for imperfect knowledge of the Psalms (Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 441).

accomplishment to Claudius Mamertus, the correspondent of Sidonius.[1] The consent of the king or his representative was generally required for ordination, for on every such occasion the king lost a possible soldier.[2] The system was followed by the inevitable abuse; a letter of Pope Gregory the Great shows that according to statements which had reached him a payment of money was a necessary preliminary to the obtaining of holy orders in parts of Gaul.[3] Within the Church the clergy were governed by the canons of the Gallican episcopal councils (p. 301); in their relations with laymen they were judged by Roman law (cf. p. 303). Married men entering the priesthood were obliged, like the bishops, to put away their wives or to dwell with them as sisters.

The most important man in the diocese after the bishop was the archdeacon. It was his duty to supervise the clergy and compose disputes; in these matters and in many connected with finance he acted as the bishop's lieutenant.[4] He also superintended the relief of the poor, and directed such education as was imparted. It was his function also to preside over the common life of the clergy attached to churches. S. Patroclus, when a deacon, was so austere that he refused to eat at the common table, whereupon he was rebuked by the archdeacon;[5] a common table for the canons of the church of S. Martin at Tours was established by Baudin, seventeenth bishop, an ex-referendary of Lothar I.[1] Archpriests (*archipresbyteri*), in some ways corresponding to the modern rural-deans, were subordinate and were responsible to the archdeacons[2] for the good conduct of the priests and deacons in their districts. They seem to have lived in the towns of second rank (*castra*), or in townships or large villages (*vici*), and to have controlled all the clergy in these and the surrounding region. In V. 4 we read that the archpriest Munderic, residing in the *castrum* of Tonnerre, was summoned to act for Tetricus, bishop of Langres, who was seriously ill. The title of archpriest occurs on tombstones of the sixth century both in Egypt and in Gaul,[3] and is several times mentioned in Gregory's works.[4]

---

[1] Sidonius, *Letters*, tr. O. M. Dalton, i, p. lxxxii.

[2] The bishop might on his own authority ordain the sons, grandsons, or great-grandsons of priests. Enfranchised serfs could be ordained by the consent of their masters. (Council of Orleans in 511.)

[3] Ewald and Hartmann, *Letters of Gregory the Great*, v. 58. In Gregory the Great's *Letters*, a priest's wife is even called *presbytera sua* (IV. 11).

[4] In Italy the archdeacon, assisted by an *oeconomus*, administered the diocesan finances; he provided for building and restoration, payment of stipends, legal expenditure, distribution of alms, and other disbursements (*Ad archidiaconum spectabat ecclesiastici thesauri custodia illiusque dispensatio*, Ducange, s. v. *Archidiaconus*, with references to Prudentius, *Hymn. in. S. Laurentium*, and Paulinus, *Mirac. S. Martini*, Bk. IV). In Gaul the responsibility to the bishop for the administration of Church property was in course of time transferred to the *vidame* (*vice-dominus*).

The archdeacon was what his name implies, head of the deacons; though the right-hand man of the bishop, he could not properly hold priest's orders. Natalis, bishop of Salona, in 590 desired to rid himself of his archdeacon, Honorius, which he did by forcing him to receive ordination as a priest, because this disqualified him from becoming archdeacon again (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 455).

[5] V. P. ix. 1. He would not come: *ad convivium mensae canonicae cum reliquis clericis.*

Ordinary priests (*presbyteri*) served parishes in the towns, the smaller *vici*, and the *villae* or settlements adjoining the country residences of large landowners ; but the less important cures were sometimes held by deacons.[5] In the case of *villae*, the landowner presented a candidate for institution. An incumbent might not leave his cure without the written permission of his bishop. He wore a clerical habit distinct from that of laymen, and was tonsured. The circular tonsure distinctive of the Roman Church is perhaps first definitely mentioned in literature in Gregory's Lives of the Fathers.[6] Bede (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 1) says that Hadrian who came with Theodore into England had first the oriental tonsure 'of S. Paul'; he waited four months for his hair to grow again, 'that it might be shorn in the shape of a crown', i. e. in the Roman way. In c. 21 of Bede's fifth book Ceolfrid, Benedict Biscop's successor at Jarrow, in a letter to King Naitan, notes the variety of tonsures, and declares that of Peter to have had the form of a crown, as a sign of the Passion of Christ, since it represented the crown of thorns; the Celtic tonsure, in which the front half of the head was shorn, is declared to be that worn by Simon Magus.[1] Parish priests were probably less numerous in Gaul than we might suppose, judging from the size of the country. The reason was that in the sixth century parishes were relatively few and sparse. Great areas, afterwards inhabited, were either covered by forest or thinly peopled and without large villages. Much land had gone out of cultivation since Roman times.[2] The sixth-century parish was generally found at some important point on the road-system, or on the waterways, wherever conditions favoured the formation of a *vicus*. The position of the country parson with regard to the parish somewhat resembled that of the bishop to the diocese. He had certain delegated powers of jurisdiction; and administered the property which it generally possessed, though naturally the bishop or his representative could intervene if he so desired. The parish clergy, like those of churches in towns, were the relieving-officers of the Merovingian period. The Church in many places supported the poor, many of whom might otherwise have starved or swollen the ranks of wandering beggars. Such poor people had their names entered on the *matricula*, or register, and were fed every day, probably by voluntary helpers. Remigia, a matron who had a withered arm, was cured when at the memorial cell or chapel of Martin at Candes (V. S. M. ii. 22). She was then able to mix wine and water for the registered poor who gathered there.[3] She performed this service throughout the day, while a man, Vinastes, superintended the distribution of food.[1] The poor on the register of an important church, like that of S. Martin at Tours, became attached to the place which benefited them, and resented outrage offered to it. When Eberulf was murdered in the atrium by Claudius, they rose and took a savage revenge on the surviving offender.[2] Poor-boxes were kept in churches and monasteries.[3]

---

[1] *Hic instituit mensam canonicorum* (X. 30). The church of S. Martin had an abbey attached to it, the monks of which in course of time lapsed for a period into the easier life of canons.

[2] E. Loening, *Gesch. des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, ii, p. 351 ; Ducange, s. v. *Archipresbyter*. Canon 7 of the second Council of Tours (A. D. 567) and Canon 20 of the Council of Auxerre (A. D. 578) are concerned with archpriests.

[3] A stone found at Brives bears the name of Baudulf, *archipresbyter* (Le Blant, *Nouveau recueil des inscr. chrétiennes de la Gaule*, 1892, p. 218, No. 222 a). The arrangement by which an archpriest was responsible for more than one church, helped by ordinary priests as his vicars, is mentioned in canon 27 of the Council held at Tours in 567 (Leclercq, in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', cols. 393–4). Much of our scanty information is derived from canons of the Gallican councils and from early lives of Gallican saints.

[4] V. 5 ; G. M. 5 ; V. P. ix. 3.

[5] Cautinus when only a deacon is appointed to the *vicus* of Issoire (G. C. 29).

[6] XVII. 1. The passage is a curious one. When Nicetius, the future bishop and saint, was born, a faint circle of hair was observed on his head : *nam cum partu fuisset effusus, omne caput eius, ut est consuetudo nascentium infantium, a capillis nudum cernebatur, in circuitu vero modicorum pilorum ordo apparuit, ut putares, ab eisdem coronam clerici fuisse signatam.* Cf. Thomassinus, *Discipl. Eccl.* I. ii. ch. 39 ; A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 208.

---

[1] On the question of tonsure as debated between the Roman and Celtic Churches in Britain see Plummer's note in his edition of Bede's *Eccl. Hist.* vol. ii, pp. 353–4.

[2] For country parishes see A. Marignan, as above, pp. 200 ff. It was one of the great services of the Benedictines that the multiplication of their houses in the seventh century brought more and more land into cultivation.

[3] *Matricula quae ibi congregata est.* The word *matricula* had come to be used to describe the body of poor people whose names were entered on it. For the *matricularii* cf. Fustel de Coulanges, iii, p. 587.

References to deacons are too numerous to cite, but there is no mention of deaconesses. In the first half of the sixth century there was some anxiety among the bishops over the employment of deaconesses to administer the cup ; an example of this practice, sanctioned by Breton priests, is illustrated by a letter of three bishops, one of whom was Licinius, metropolitan of Tours.[4]

Discipline. Though the Church in Gaul numbered among her servants, from the bishops to the deacons, many men of holy life, of courage, ardour, and loving-kindness, the course of the sixth century had witnessed a progressive degeneration. The indiscipline and licence of the Franks, the unchecked violence, greed, and indulgence of gross desires even among those in highest place, could not but find reflection among the clergy, and every bishop who yielded to the force of bad example undermined the discipline of those over whom he was set. The Frank and the Gallo-Roman learned each other's defects more rapidly than they acquired each other's qualities ; the Frank grew more luxurious, the Gallo-Roman more violent ; in the sixth century the bishops were still chiefly of Gallo-Roman origin.[5]

---

[1] V. M. ii. 22. The memorial cell (*Cellula Condatensis*) was a place of pilgrimage and is frequently mentioned by Gregory. In V. M. iv. 23 we read of a man supported for six years, with other persons, by the resources of the holy cell (*divitiis sanctae cellulae*).

[2] VII. 26 (29). They are here called *matricularii* and were joined by *reliqui pauperes* (presumably poor men not yet on the roll), and by the *energumeni*, or men ' possessed ', perhaps epileptics.

[3] On one occasion the poor-box in the church of S. Martin was robbed. The thief was seized, and collapsed (*corruit ad terram*), dying soon afterwards (V. S. M. i. 31). S. Senoch used to deposit money brought by the faithful to his new monastery: *in pauperum marsupiis* (V. P. 15, 1).

[4] Quoted by Leclercq in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, art. ' Gallicane, Église ', col. 422.

[5] Latin names are far more common than Teutonic, and it is probable that some bishops with Teutonic names were really of Gallo-Roman descent. But the number of Frankish bishops and abbots was increasing. Bertram of Bordeaux was Guntram's cousin ; a number of other Frankish or Burgundian names occur, including that of Ragnemod, bishop of Paris.

Outwardly the sixth century had been a period of triumph for the Catholic Church of Gaul. It witnessed no less than fifty-four episcopal councils. At its beginning the Franks had been converted, and the Arian Visigoths driven from all their possessions north of the Pyrenees except Septimania; at its end, Recared, the Visigoth, had renounced Arianism.[1] Many passages in the History show how bitter had been the feeling between Catholic and Arian, and how great was the triumph at the final victory. Yet while the Church was purging her borders from the heretic, she was powerless to suppress the unclean thing within. Gregory, as a good churchman, is the most impartial of witnesses, and in his pages we read of characters which would have been incredible in the Gallican episcopate a hundred years before; we encounter the unjust, the rapacious, the simoniacal, the brutal, the battling, the drunken, the utterly debauched; each mention of such unworthy pastors bears fresh testimony to the fairness of a writer belonging to their own order but making no attempt to deny their infamy.[2] The wealth which had passed into the hands of the Church in many ways increased the mischief; it tended to bring about a community of interest between the bishops, as controllers of Church property, and the unprincipled landowners who were their neighbours and set them no good example.

The kings, though as a rule they chose well by nominating high officials trained in affairs, sometimes imposed their favourites, and interfered with the freedom of episcopal elections. The latter part of the sixth century, when Gregory held the see of Tours, was one of the worst in the history of the Church; the seventh century was destined to witness some change for the better through the revival of the missionary spirit. Columban was carrying on his mission in Gaul during the later years of Gregory, zealously sowing seed which did not all fall upon stony ground; the example of the foreign teacher was felt by many monks and clergy, despite the difference between the Irish and the Frankish, or even the Gallo-Roman temperament. Before Columban left the country for Italy he had openly rebuked queen Brunhild and her son Theuderic, king of

---

[1] Beyond the limits of Gaul, the Arian Vandals were crushed by Belisarius; the Suevi and the Lombards voluntarily renounced the great heresy.

[2] For the state of the Church in Gaul, see A. Marignan, as above, i, ch. v; F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, p. 50.

Burgundy, risking the death by stoning which a like boldness had already brought upon Desiderius, bishop of Vienne. In the reign of Dagobert, S. Amand, a Poitevin monk who became bishop of Maestricht, followed Columban's example, publicly censuring that king for his licentiousness and luxury. At the close of the century, Willibrord the Anglo-Saxon inspired Frankish bishops by his example to join in his dangerous missions to the Saxons; it proves the awakening of a new spiritual fervour that a metropolitan, Wulfram of Sens, and other Frankish bishops, left their sees to share this work. But the end of civil strife under Pepin of Héristal, and the new concentration upon wars abroad, proved the beginning of another dark period for the Church, culminating in the time of Charles Martel. The rulers of Austrasia, engaged in continual expeditions, and compelled to drag their men each year afield to all points of the compass, were driven to reward their fighting leaders at the expense of the Church. Charles Martel, while favouring missionary effort among the pagan Saxons, filled the sees at home with fighting men who had nothing of the cleric about them but the tonsure; men living for the pleasure of the chase and of the table made the episcopate a byword for ungodliness. It was left to a second Anglo-Saxon, Boniface, under the patronage of Carloman and Pepin, to introduce the reforms through which the Church rose to respectability and power in the reign of Charles the Great. Under settled government and better training, the education of the bishops again brought them consideration; the Councils of the Church began to efface those of secular institution. Charles conferred on the bishops a rank superior to that of his counts, because 'while the latter only helped him to act, the former helped him to think'.

If, then, we survey the three centuries between the death of Clovis and that of Charles, we find the Church a prey to more abuses in Gregory's time than in any other except that of Charles Martel. Passage after passage reveals the low standard of clerical discipline. When bishops and abbots so often set evil examples, or failed to enforce the rule of right living, it was impossible that clergy and monks should escape contagion; we read with distressing frequency of violence, lawlessness, disloyalty, rapacity, and self-indulgence in all its forms, not least in those of debauchery, gluttony, and drunkenness. We may take a few examples illustrating these vices as manifested by all ranks in the Church, from the bishop to the subdeacon, noticing first a few examples of pious and charitable life, to preserve the due sense of proportion and to show that evil by no means reigned alone.[1]

Luxurious living was not the rule in the 'church houses'. Except in rare cases, the bishop did not move about the country in luxury like a great personage. If too ill or weakly from age to ride, he travelled in a wheeled vehicle which cannot have offered much comfort in a country without well-kept roads, unless, as was sometimes the case, there were plenty of cushions.[2] The prince-bishop of the seventeenth or eighteenth century had few prototypes among the contemporaries of Gregory of Tours. S. Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, Gregory's ancestor on the maternal side (V. P. viii. 3) is described by him as the perfect bishop. He chastised the offender, but treated the repentant with lenience; he was charitable and strenuous; his heart was in the building of churches and houses, the sowing of fields, the cultivation of vineyards, though none of these things disturbed his ardour in prayer.[3] Salvius, the abbot recluse, who was made bishop of Albi and died in 584, was a man of great abstinence and equal generosity. 'He never would keep any money, and if forced to receive any at once gave it away.' He was also a man of courage; when the plague raged at Albi, and most people left the town, he remained at his post (VII. 1). In like manner Theodore of Marseilles remained with those of the citizens who refused to leave the city during the outbreak of plague in 587. Making the church of S. Victor his headquarters, he passed the time in vigils and prayers that the affliction might pass.[1] Maurilius, bishop of Cahors, was charitable, just in judgement, a protector of the poor from wicked judges. He was a man of stoic fortitude, and a believer in the value of penitential suffering. What shall be said of one who, during an attack of gout, deliberately increased his pain? It is also recorded that he got by heart the genealogies recorded in the Old Testament.[2] Victor, bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, outrageously treated by the infamous bishops Salonius and Sagittarius, had mercy on the subordinates in the outrage, whom these chief offenders finally delivered up to him. Remembering the precept of Our Lord, he would not render evil for evil, and let the men go free (V. 20); his strange reward for this merciful action was excommunication by an episcopal council.[3] Agricola of Châlons, and Dalmatius of Rodez were both holy men, abstinent, charitable, and devout (V. 45, 46). Aëtius, archdeacon of Paris, stood out as a gallant figure when he appeared before the bishops at the Council of Paris in 577, and adjured them not to let Praetextatus perish;[4] this action gave the cue to Gregory himself, who followed the same line with all the authority of his great position in the Church. The above is not an exhaustive list even of the good bishops and higher clergy who receive mention at Gregory's hands. Men who do their duty in quietness seldom find their way into any history, for the very reason that they make no disturbance. So it doubtless was with the great number of Gallican bishops and clergy whose names are not recorded.

---

[1] Ruinart in his Preface to his edition is not unnaturally more careful to emphasize the deeds of holy bishops than of those whose conduct disgraced their order (§ 28). Those who seek to remedy his omission must remember that the holy bishops did in fact exist, and refrain from exaggeration on the other side.

[2] Bishops of high birth like Bertram of Bordeaux, cousin of Guntram, travelled very comfortably (p. 154), but they were probably exceptions. Probably most bishops rode on horseback unless physically disabled. In long processions, like those undertaken during Rogations, they also rode.

[3] IV. 36: *Erat enim castigator deliquentium, poenitentumque remissor, elemosinarius atque strenuus in labore; ecclesias erigere, domus componere, serere agros, vineas pastinare diligentissime studebat. Sed non eum hae res ab oratione turbabant.* One of those whom he ordered several times to be beaten for committing adultery was a deacon, who after the death of Nicetius paid the extreme penalty for outraging the memory of the saint. The spectre of this bishop used drastic methods against a holy man who neglected to carry a warning message to his malignant successor Priscus, and his deacon Martin. It struck him with its fists on the throat: *clausis pugnis coepit guttur eius caedere. Mane autem facto, inflatis faucibus cum magno dolore accessit ad viros.* . . . The character of Nicetius seems to have been too masterful to attract.

The bad men on the other hand receive an advertisement which would distress us more if we did not remember that it was Gregory's object to deter the many from evil courses by exposing the wickedness of the few. Offences against women are frequently noted; the case of the deacon beaten at the order of Bishop Nicetius has been mentioned above. Dagulf, the worst possible type of abbot, robber, homicide, and incurable adulterer, met his death at the hands of a man whose wife he had debauched.[1] A cleric at Lisieux was a notorious evil liver.[2] He corrupted a woman of good birth, whose hair he cropped, taking her about with him dressed as a man. This woman's relatives, affronted in their pride, seized the man and put him in bonds, while they burned the woman alive. Aetherius, bishop of Lisieux, pitying his state, paid twenty pieces of gold for his freedom, since the woman's relatives had determined that he should either pay a composition to redeem his offence or die. On his assertion that he was an educated man and capable of teaching, the bishop collected the boys of the city and committed them to his care. He also gave him some land, and the man received invitations to the houses of his pupils. But these opportunities led him to attempt seductions and brought him once more into his former predicament. Again Aetherius intervened, bought him off, and treated him with excessive lenience. His reward was the entry of the cleric into a plot with the archdeacon; the bishop was to be slain that the latter might succeed him. They suborned a third person, also a cleric, to cut him down with an axe while he was visiting the labourers in the fields. This man, however, could not bring himself to do the deed, and betrayed the villainous pair. Thwarted a first time, they tried a new method. Breaking into the bishop's chamber, where his bed was placed among those of his clergy, they cried out that they had seen a woman come out of the room. They then had the bishop, an old man of seventy, bound and placed in confinement. His bonds were miraculously loosed, and he took refuge in Guntram's kingdom. The conspirators then hastened to Chilperic, submitting the archdeacon's claim to the bishopric, and declaring that the flight of Aetherius proved his guilt. But Chilperic was incredulous, and dismissed them to their city, where the people gave them an angry reception. Aetherius was finally restored with honour.[1] Theodulf, a deacon of Paris, was a bad character. Taking advantage of an early friendship with Audioveus, bishop of Angers, he deserted the church in Paris in which he had been ordained deacon, and went to live on this bishop (X. 14), who did not like to turn him away, being a man of good breeding and loyal in friendship.[2] The bishop had built a ' solar ' on the walls of Angers, where he would sometimes dine. One day, after dinner, he was coming down from this chamber. A servant led the way, the deacon followed ; then came the bishop, and after him an abbot. The deacon was intoxicated, and struck the servant upon the neck, with the result that he himself fell forward over the wall, and but for the abbot, who seized him from behind, the bishop would have shared his fate.

---

[1] IX. 22. As noted above, Gregory had a high opinion of Bishop Theodore.

[2] V. 42: *in scripturis ecclesiasticis valde instructus, ita ut seriem diversarum generationum quae in libris Veteris Testamenti describitur . . . hic plerumque memoriter recensiret.*

[3] The reason for this was that as he had publicly complained before his fellow bishops in Council, he had no right secretly to remit punishment without their consent. We are not surprised to learn that the kindly Guntram obtained his readmission to communion.

[4] i. e. Praetextatus, bishop of Rouen, whom Chilperic was using every artifice to ruin (V. 12 (18)) by appearing himself at the Council.

---

[1] VIII. 19. The abbot in the man's absence went to his house attended by a cleric (*cum uno clerico*). The husband returned at night and, by the light of blazing straw, killed the abbot and his paramour with an axe. In connexion with Dagulf's case, Gregory adjures all clerics to avoid his example, and alludes to the canons regulating the admission of women to the houses of the clergy: *ideoque documentum sit hec causa clericis ne contra canonum statuta extraniarum mulierum consorcium potiantur, cum hec et ipsa lex canonica et omnes scripturae sanctae prohibeant, praeter his feminis de quibus crimen non potest aestimari* (e. g. mothers or sisters, and wives treated like these). Cf. H. Netzer, *La condition des curés ruraux du Vᵉ au VIIIᵉ siècle* in *Mélanges d'hist. du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferd. Lot* (1926), pp. 589–93; C. Galy, *La famille à l'époque mérov.*, pp. 60 ff.

[2] VI (36): *luxuriosus nimis amatorque mulierum et gulae ac fornicationis omnique immunditiae valde deditus.*

The vices of dishonesty, disloyalty, and covetousness were deplorably frequent among the clergy. Lampadius, an intriguing and covetous deacon of Langres, was indirectly responsible for the murder of Gregory's brother Peter (V. 5). When, after the death of Bishop Tetricus, he had done much evil, defrauding the Church and enriching himself with lands, vineyards, and slaves, he was finally stripped of his ill-gotten wealth, and died in the poverty which he deserved. Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans, was cruel to the people and a robber of other folk's goods. He was bitter, implacable, and harsh, but his wife was yet harsher, even wickedly inciting him to new ill deeds.[1] He would strike or kick those who offended him, crying: 'Because I entered the Church, shall I submit to wrong without a word?' On his death, his wife attempted to keep for herself property given to the Church in her husband's lifetime, but was compelled to give it up. In the days of her power she had committed incredible outrages, some of which Gregory thinks it better not to describe, though his candour goes sufficiently far. The archdeacon of Marseilles protected against the count Albinus some men of his who had stolen from a ship a quantity of oil:[2] 'The man who should dare admit such a theft never crossed my threshold,' said he, though he had already made inquiry and knew that the stolen goods were on his premises.[3]

---

[1] This story of Bishop Aetherius shows a tolerance of which Gregory the Great would by no means have approved. The pope insisted that when a cleric had acted in such a way as to deserve deprivation he should never be reinstated (Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 394). A certain freedom seems to have been permitted to Gallican clergy in worldly affairs which would not have been sanctioned by the pope. In V. P. 6, Gregory of Tours without adverse comment mentions the return from Marseilles of one of his priests : *cum commercio negotiationis suae*. There were bad and worldly clergy in Italy, but the control to which they were subjected was probably more efficient than in Gaul.

[2] X. 14 : *ut non se posset ab eius importunitate discutere, pro eo quod bonis moribus et affectu pio erat.*

The priest Riculf, chief accomplice of Leudast in his plot (V. 49), and strangely left at large after the excommunication of his principal, behaved in an astounding fashion during the absence of Gregory at the episcopal council. He marched into the 'church house' as if he were already bishop, took an inventory of the church plate, and claimed control of all the other property. He distributed bribes to the more important clergy, presenting them even with vineyards and fields; the clerks in lower orders he quelled by violence, beating them with his own hands and crying: 'Recognize in me your master who hath triumphed over his enemies and by his genius purged the city of the scum from Auvergne' (i. e. Gregory, and his ancestors from Auvergne who had in the past occupied the see of Tours). On the bishop's return, he ignored his presence except in so far as to threaten his life. Thereupon Gregory had him shut up in a monastery, from which, however, he escaped, as described below. Riculf was a 'tainted' priest, who had previously been degraded from the rank of archdeacon. Withal he was *semper elatus, inflatus, praesumptuosus*, and wont to say in private that by perjury alone can you get the better of a really sharp man. Felix, bishop of Nantes, was apparently privy to the plot of Leudast against Gregory.[1] When Riculf was finally confined by Gregory in a monastery, Felix sent persons by whose aid he escaped to Nantes ; there Felix cordially received a man whom he ought to have regarded with loathing.[2] The deacon Frontonius, who wished to get rid of his bishop, Charterius of Périgueux, a city formerly Guntram's, but at the time (582) under the rule of Chilperic, seems to have conspired with the count Nunnichius for this purpose. It was so managed that men carrying letters, ostensibly written by the bishop, were arrested by the count's men, and the letters examined. In these were found most compromising remarks about Chilperic, one to the effect that passing under this king's jurisdiction out of that of his brother Guntram was like exchanging Paradise for hell.[3]

---

[1] VIII. 39: *vir valde saevus in populo. . . . Ad cuius animum acerbum atque immitam coniux accesserat saevior, quae illum in committendis sceleribus nequissimis consilii stimulis perurgebat.* A priest in Italy mentioned by Cassiodorus (*Var.* iv. 18) was accused of digging up dead bodies for the gold upon them; he would have been a fit companion for this bishop.

[2] The oil was in jars (*orcae*), and perhaps, like that in sixty *orcae* of oil mentioned by Cassiodorus (*Var.* iii. 7), intended for burning in lamps: *ad implenda luminaria.*

[3] IV. 43: *inquirens et inveniens.* He was imprisoned, and fined four thousand *solidi*, but he afterwards compounded in the king's court (*in praesentia regis Sygiberti*), paying four times the value of the stolen property.

There was not only disloyalty to fellow clerics but to the king. Egidius, bishop of Reims, a partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy, conspired openly and continuously with Chilperic against the royal house. When he was at last arraigned, his guilt was so obvious and so fully proven, that he was obliged to confess without reserve, throwing himself on the mercy of his fellow bishops and of King Childebert.[4] During Gundovald's adventure, various bishops supported him against Guntram, one of them being Bertram of Bordeaux, the king's cousin, another the above-mentioned Palladius of Saintes.

There were some highly placed members of the Church in whom all the vices seem to have been in operation together. Salonius and Sagittarius had been trained at Lyons under

---

[1] V. 49 : *memoratae causae fautor extiterat.*

[2] *Ibid.* : *intercedentibus Felicis episcopi missis . . . circumventum perjuriis abbatem fuga elabitur et usque ad Felicem accedit episcopum ; eumque ille ambienter collegit, quem execrare debuerat.* Some bishops were prepared to deal sternly with clergy who had intrigued or conspired against them, like Palladius of Saintes, who had such plotters flogged (VIII. 22).

[3] VI. 22 : *inter reliqua erat insertum quasi quereretur sacerdos se a paradiso ad inferos descendisse ; scilicet quod a regno Gunthramni in Chilperici fuerit dicionibus commutatus.* This was one of the occasions on which Chilperic showed insight and common sense.

[4] X. 19. The bishops, reluctant as they were to admit the ill-doing of one of their number, could not but yield to the evidence. They degraded him as the canons sanction required, and banished him to Strasbourg.

Gregory's maternal ancestor the sainted Nicetius. But no sooner were they installed in their sees of Gap and Embrun than they forgot their training and began a career of robbery, violence, homicide, adultery, and divers other kinds of wickedness.[1] They ended by sending a band of ruffians to disturb the birthday feast of the bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. These men broke in with swords and arrows, killed the servants, carried off the plate, and after cutting the bishop's garments went off, leaving him outraged and helpless.[2] This was too much for King Guntram, in whose dominions their dioceses were. He convened a council of bishops at Lyons, where the scandalous pair were degraded. But the king soon cancelled the effect of this just severity, because they successfully appealed to the pope.[3] Restored to their sees, they surpassed their former records. Joining in the Lombard wars of Mummolus armed and equipped like laymen, they slew many with their own hands. At home their violence led to a general complaint to the king. They were again summoned to the presence; this time the king sent them to remote monasteries where they were placed under strict guard. Fortunately for them, the elder of the king's young sons began to ail, and friends of the bishop's court suggested a connexion between this illness and an unjust banishment of innocent men. The timid and superstitious Guntram issued an order of release, and once more the pair were reinstated.[4] At first they were reformed characters, never ceasing to chant psalms, to do works of charity, or to fast day by day, and to pass the nights in hymns and pious meditations.[5] But soon the feasting and drinking began again, and clergy who had performed the nocturnal services were pledged in brimming cups.[6] There was no word more of God. At dawn they rose from table and getting beneath soft coverlets slept off their liquor until the third hour; sometimes women were introduced. Getting up late in the day, they bathed, and set themselves down again to carouse. Once more the shameless pair were brought before an episcopal council on charges of adultery, manslaughter, *lèse-majesté*, and treason. Once more they were dispossessed of their sees, once more kept under guard, this time in a church. And once more they escaped (V. 20 (27)). We hear no more of Salonius; but Sagittarius reappears among the supporters of the pretender Gundovald, who promised him the see of Toulouse (VII. 29 (28)). He accompanied that ill-fated adventurer to Convenae. There he distinguished himself by parading the walls in arms, and hurling down stones on the enemy with his own hand (VII. 37). He was one of the treacherous four who persuaded Gundovald to go out to his doom. Captured by Guntram's general Leudegisel, he tried his fortune by a final attempt to escape, covering his face in a hood, and making for the trees. This time his luck failed; a man with a drawn sword cut off his head, hood and all (VII. 38).

---

[1] V. 20: *In proprio elati arbitrio coeperunt in pervasionibus, sceleribus, caedibus, homicidiis, adulteriis diversisque sceleribus insano furore grassari.*

[2] *Ita ut cum gladiis et sagittis inruerunt super eum venientesque scinderunt vestimenta eius, ministros caeciderunt, vasa vel omne adparatum prandii auferentes, relinquentes episcopum in grandi contumelia.*

[3] Salonius and Sagittarius asked his permission to lay their case before John III at Rome. The pope sent a letter to Guntram, bidding him restore the two bishops to their sees. This the king did after administering a verbal castigation (*castigatos verbis prius multis dimisit*).

[4] *Ite quantocius, et laxate eos, deprecantes ut orent pro parvulis nostris.*

[5] *In tantum compuncti sunt ut viderentur nunquam a psallentio cessare, celebrare ieiunia, elemosinas exercere.*

[6] *Ita plerumque noctes epulando atque bibendo ducebant, ut clericis matutinas*

Cautinus, the former archdeacon of Clermont who had cunningly secured the bishopric (p. 298), proved after his election a monster of drunkenness and depravity. He deprived people of their lands, going to the length of burying alive a priest who refused to surrender certain title-deeds; the escape of this priest forms a most remarkable story (IV. *12*). Cautinus was so besotted that four men were needed to remove him from table.[1] Ignorant and unscrupulous, he held nothing sacred.[2] Gunthar, bishop of Tours, was also a drunkard (X. 31).

---

in ecclesia celebrantibus hi pocula poscerent et vina libarent. Nulla prorsus de Deo erat mentio.

[1] Another drunken bishop was Eunius, who, while celebrating mass at Paris, ' emitted a neighing sound ', and fell to the ground: *Nimio enim vino deditus erat, et plerumque ita deformiter inebriabatur ut gressum facere non valeret* (V. *40*). Droctegisel of Soissons was a man of similar type: *vorax cibi ac vini* (IX. 37); as was the priest Epachius, though a man of senatorial birth (G. M. 84).

[2] *In Cautino autem nihil sancti, nihil pensi fuit. De omnibus enim scripturis, tam ecclesiasticis quam saecularibus, ad plene immunis fuit* (IV. 12). Cautinus loved to consort with Jews, not to convert them, but to get the valuables in which they traded. They flattered him, and sold him the things for more than they were worth.

c. Episcopal Elections and Councils.

The procedure of the fifth century[1] was, as far as possible, retained; the clergy and people of the *civitas* met under the presidency of the metropolitan of the province, often supported by as many of his suffragans as could attend, and at this meeting one of the candidates was adopted. But in the sixth century this was no longer the end of the election; an additional step of cardinal importance had to be added as a result of the new monarchic system under which Gaul was now governed. A signed document affirming the local choice, known as the *consensus*, had now to be transmitted to the king, whose diploma (*praeceptio*) was indispensable to the candidate. The king could, if he chose, approve the name, in which case the bishop-elect, entering the diocese with his *praeceptio*, was finally confirmed as holder of the see. But he could also, at his pleasure, refuse it, either ordering the electors to choose again, or himself substituting another name. Whatever might be the appearance of free choice, all hung upon the royal decision, and this fact doubled the former corruption. Whereas in Roman times local bribery might suffice, it was now also necessary to satisfy the 'fount of honour', which as a rule could only be done by a free flow of gold. Most of the Merovingian kings were venal; they had their price, and it was high. It was easy for the Council of Orleans in 549 to forbid the purchase of bishoprics for money, but this decree was only valid against the local offenders; it could not be enforced against the king. The abuses which followed on this state of affairs were numerous. The king might choose some favourite, or some ex-official seeking new employment, in which case the familiar scandal was witnessed of laymen, wholly unspiritual by nature, unfairly thrust into the highest position offered by the Church without passing in due course through the lower grades of deacon or priest;[2] they were promoted at once to episcopal rank without any probation in the intermediate grades.[1] It is not difficult to imagine the kind of recruits received by the Church through this procedure, though occasionally a layman of fine character and high repute might, by exception, have the royal favour.[2] Even worse than favouritism was the callous indifference of kings who appointed the highest bidder, regardless of his character or quality, provided they obtained their fee.

---

[1] Cf. *The Letters of Sidonius*, tr. O. M. Dalton, i, pp. lxxvi ff. For elections in Merovingian times see Fustel de Coulanges. as above, pp. 544 ff.

[2] Chilperic disliked the clergy as a body, and Gregory says that under him few clerics obtained bishoprics; everything went to laymen. Promises were made by the kings that laymen should not be appointed, but they were frequently broken. Guntram after confirming the appointment of a layman to Aix (VIII. 20) gave such a pledge, but in 585 he nevertheless secured the see of Bordeaux for Gundegisel, ex-count of Saintes, and of that of Eauze for

The kings did not allow their unconstitutional appointments to be reversed. An example will show how difficult it was to cancel them, especially if the attempt was made without tact. Lothar I had authorized the consecration of Emerius as bishop of Saintes without any reference to the metropolitan, the bishop of Bordeaux (IV. 19 (26)). After Lothar's death, Leontius, as metropolitan, summoned the bishops of his province, and they together deposed Emerius, afterwards drawing up a *consensus* in favour of Heraclius, a priest of Bordeaux.[3] This document, signed by all, they sent by the hands of Heraclius himself to King Charibert, then at Paris. Passing through Tours on his way, Heraclius asked Bishop Eufronius also to sign the *consensus*, which the holy man emphatically refused to do (*quod vir Dei manifeste respuit*). Heraclius, received by

---

Desiderius, then a layman (VIII. 22). On this appointment Gregory comments by quoting *Aeneid*, iii. 56 (his favourite quotation):

Quid non mortalia pectora cogis
Auri sacra fames?

His heart must have been sore at such an action on the part of the king who generally set a good example in these matters and made in a public speech a high-sounding declaration against Simon Magus and all his works (p. 58).

[1] Cf. the case of Badegisel, cited below, p. 297.

[2] e. g. Sulpicius, appointed by Guntram, as noted below. Pope Gregory the Great, in contemporary Italy, did not sanction the election of a layman, though permitting that of a monk. Gregory the Great was himself a deacon when he was chosen as pope (X. 1); deacons were often elected bishops in that age (names of deacons thus promoted are given by J. Bingham, *Antiq. of the Christ. Church*, Bk. II. x. § 5).

In a letter addressed to Childebert II (Ewald and Hartmann, v. 60) he begged that king not to sanction the appointment of laymen as bishops.

[3] Apart from their precipitate ejection of Emerius, a step calculated to enrage the king, their action appears to have been in order, assuming always that they had obtained the support of a majority among the citizens of Saintes. But Charibert was irritated by the hurried action of the bishops without his consent, and in fact their diplomacy prejudiced a good case. If they had approached Charibert before touching Emerius, it is possible that they might have had the support of Eufronius and the subsequent approval of his successor. It is less certain that Charibert would have yielded; but he would not have treated Heraclius with such indignity, and Leontius would have come out of the case richer by a thousand pieces of gold.

Charibert, appears to have played a rather provocative part, for he began by offering the king salutation in the name of 'the apostolic see'. He meant Bordeaux (cf. p. 260, n. 2), but Charibert pointedly asked if the greeting was from the Pope of Rome. He was then told that Leontius and his provincial bishops had deposed Emerius, as having obtained the see of Saintes without canonical sanction, and that they had put forward his own name in the *consensus* which he now brought for the royal approval. The king was infuriated by this reversal of an appointment made by his father. 'Dost think', he shouted, 'that there surviveth no son of Lothar to protect his father's action, when these men dare to drive out one chosen by his royal will?' He followed up this question by having the unhappy bishop-designate flung into a wagon filled with thorns, and carted beyond his frontiers. He then sent certain religious men [1] to Saintes together with some of his own officers, fined Leontius a thousand gold pieces, punished the provincial bishops, and restored Emerius to his see. Gregory closes his account of the affair with the words: 'So was wiped out the affront offered to the king' (*Et sic principis est tolta injuria*). The whole episode shows the absolute control over the election exercised by the kings, for an election was worthless unless they approved it, whereas they tolerated no appeal against their arbitrary appointments. It is plain that Eufronius, Gregory's predecessor at Tours, held Leontius to be in the wrong, and the language used by Gregory himself suggests that he concurred in this view. Thus, while some bishops were still bold enough to kick against the pricks, others, men of high standing in the Church and in the country, considered it mischievous or vain to act against the expressed wish of the king.

Given a king who would not be bribed and who had the best interests of the Church at heart, the royal privilege might do good rather than harm. As a rule, Guntram was such a king, as, perhaps, had been his uncle Theuderic before him.[2] Gregory places an impressive speech in the mouth of Guntram to the group of would-be bishops of Bourges who in 584 had all come to him with money in their hands (VI. 39); but as noted above (p. 58) he failed to live up to his ideal in the very next year. But the general state of things revealed in the pages of the History is worse than that described by Sidonius a hundred years before, though many of the persons chosen by the kings were ex-officials, whose practical experience may have made them good administrators.

---

[1] *Directis viris religiosis*. When Theuderic sent Gallus as bishop-elect down to Clermont, he gave him an escort of bishops (V. P. vi. 3). Perhaps in this case the persons sent to reinstate Emerius were of episcopal rank.

[2] Clergy of Clermont came to Theuderic, *cum multis muneribus*, to secure the election of Gallus. But the king, knowing his virtues, was already in his favour. He gave a public banquet in his honour, and Gallus used afterwards to say that his election cost him no more than a *triens* for the cook

It is only too clear that after Gregory's death there was no improvement; the seventh century sank to an even lower level than the sixth. In 614 the Council of Paris convened by Chilperic's son and successor, Lothar II, sought to check the worst abuses, even venturing by implication to touch upon the most fatal, the arbitrary action of the king. It decreed, as was the rule when councils met, that election must be disinterested, and carried out by clergy and people according to the early canons. But it significantly added that if, through any negligence or through any powerful influence, matters were not so ordered, the election should be null and void. The bishops attending the Council had laid their hands upon the chief cause of the evil; but theirs was a pious aspiration; they were powerless to enforce their decree. Though the king was not directly named, Lothar II and his advisers took alarm, and insisted that the royal diploma was indispensable. Matters turned once more into the old groove, and the age of Charles Martel was to witness the abrogation of all rights but those of the king, who used Church patronage to reward the men who had served him well in his wars. The sees of France were filled by roystering captains, whose knowledge of religion and the duties of their new station was in inverse proportion to their knowledge of horses and dogs.[1]

As compared with France, Italy was highly favoured. Theodoric the Great was an Arian, but he was sufficiently just as a ruler to avoid flagrant abuse of power. After his death, the troubles caused by war unsettled the whole country; but

---

(V. P. vi. 3). We have the impression that the king made nothing out of the appointment.

[1] This condition of affairs began to improve under Pepin the Younger and Carloman in the middle of the eighth century, and the Gallican Church was reorganized in the reign of Charles the Great.

Gregory the Great exerted himself to the full to check the abuses which had crept in throughout all the territory under his control.[1] The chief steps taken by him with this object were as follows. As soon as any bishop died he appointed a Visitor, usually the bishop of a neighbouring diocese, whose duty it was to proceed immediately to the vacant see, prevent all improper action, more especially the candidature of a layman, and take an inventory of Church property and the private property of the deceased, in order to prevent theft; then, sometimes with the aid of the chief district-magistrate, he was to assist the electors[2] in making their choice. If the election proceeded without obstacle, the metropolitan confirmed it, and the newly-elected bishop usually went to Rome to be consecrated by the Pope. But difficulties might arise if the metropolitan exerted his right of veto, or of choice, if the voting was even. Thus in all the part of the country under the Pope's control there was no arbitrary interference by high-placed laymen; simony was made impossible; plundering after the death of a bishop was prevented, and the choice of undesirable persons rendered difficult. In the patrimony of S. Peter the worst scandals of the Gallican Church were avoided.[3] If, even after these precautions, an unsuitable person secured the see, the Pope declared the election null and void, ordering that another should be held.[4] Under this great pope the Church was free from external interference in the choice of those who filled her highest offices, and a vigilant eye was kept upon those chosen, to prevent backsliding and degeneration.[5]

Such being the conditions of orderly election and such the opportunities of corruption, it will be of interest to review a certain number of elections recorded by Gregory. We may take first a few cases in which all is carried out according to prescribed forms; next, various examples of irregularity due to the interference of kings, bishops, powerful laymen, or other individuals, or to unconstitutional action by groups consisting of clergy or citizens.

---

[1] For the details which follow see F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, pp. 372 ff.

[2] The electors were clergy, nobles, and *plebs*.

[3] Though there were other difficulties described by Dudden, who gives an account, from the Pope's *Letters*, of the factious election at Naples in 591 (as above, pp. 376 ff.).

[4] Gregory the Great would only sanction the candidature of persons brought in from outside the diocese if there was no suitable local candidate. He barred all laymen, all persons of immoral life, the grossly ignorant, those who had committed offences for which penance had been enjoined, those who had taken usury, those who had at any time married widows or divorced women, those liable to public service, and others for various causes. He accepted as candidates monks and ecclesiastics in minor orders.

[5] Dudden, pp. 381 ff.

An election carried out constitutionally and with due regard to order was that of Eufronius to the see of Tours. The citizens, having agreed upon their choice, arrived at court with their *consensus*. The king, after inquiring as to the candidate and learning his suitability, gave his diploma, after declaring: 'The will of God and the blessed Martin be done; let the election be completed.'[1] The election of a successor to the abominable Cautinus (p. 287) of Clermont resulted in the enthusiastic acceptance by the king of the *consensus* brought by the friends of the chosen man, the honourable and charitable archdeacon Avitus.[2] The king conceived so great an admiration of the archdeacon's character that he departed somewhat from canonical precedent, and caused the new bishop of Clermont to be consecrated in his presence at Metz.[3] On the death of Ageric of Verdun, Charimer the referendary was preferred both by the people and by the king to the abbot Bacciovald, who came forward to contest the see.[4] Here as no episcopal protest was made, we may perhaps assume the assent of the bishops. An orderly election was sometimes due to motives in themselves unsatisfactory, but excusable in view of the troubled character of the times. Thus, in the early fifth century, Simplicius of Autun was selected as the right person to be bishop because he was a rich man belonging to a noble family.[5]

---

[1] IV. 15: *Fiat voluntas Dei et beati Martini, electio compleatur.*

[2] IV. 35. But not before a gross attempt at simony had been made by an unworthy priest, Eufrasius, whose habit it was to give the Franks too much liquor, while he did little to relieve the poor (*plerumque inebriabat barbaros sed rare reficiebat egenos*). This man collected objects of value (*species*) from the Jews and sent them to the king by the hands of a relative, 'that he might buy with bribes that which he could never win by merit' (*ut scilicet quod meritis optinere non poterat, praemiis optineret*). We are not told whether the king kept the presents. Other candidates also offered bribes, and promised more in future.

[3] *Quem rex in tanto honore dilexit, ut parumper rigorem canonicum praeteriens, in sua eum praesentia benedici iuberet.*

[4] IX. 23: *cum consensu civium regalis decrevit auctoritas fieri sacerdotem.* Flavius, referendary of Guntram, had been elected at Chalon-sur-Saône (V. 45). If a referendary was a good man, his administrative experience made him a useful bishop.

[5] G. C. 75: *de stirpe nobili, valde dives in opibus saeculi . . . Propter illam*

Arbitrary or venal royal action is exemplified in the following cases.[1]

When Eufrasius, bishop of Clermont, died, the people chose Quintianus to succeed. But Alcima and Placidina, wife and sister of the well-known Sidonius, begged Quintianus, on the ground of his age, to make way for the younger Apollinaris; he consented, and they dispatched Apollinaris to the king.[2] At no small expense, he succeeded in obtaining the appointment (*oblatis multis muneribus in episcopatu successit*), but only lived to enjoy the dignity for four months. On his death, the king, apparently dispensing with all forms of election, ordered Quintianus to be installed (*iussit ibi sanctum Quintianum constitui*). By so doing he made at least some amends for his previous venality.

By the high-handed action of Theudebald, king of Austrasia, Cautinus, archdeacon of Clermont, had been able to supplant the priest Cato (p. 273), who was the choice of the people and, conditionally, of the provincial bishops and the people (IV. 7). Lothar I, great-uncle of Theudebald, who survived that ineffective king and succeeded to his kingdom, continued the royal support accorded to Cautinus. He tried to secure the election of Cato as bishop of Tours, on the death of Gallus, in order that Cautinus might be rid of him; but the plan was defeated by the vanity of the otherwise most virtuous priest. On the death of Bishop Gunthar of Tours the king unconstitutionally sent a diploma to Tours, ordering the election of Cato, priest at Clermont. A body of clergy with Leubast, *martyrarius* and abbot, went in state to Clermont to learn the wishes of the bishop-designate. To give them an idea of his importance, he kept them waiting for several days. They showed signs of restiveness, saying that if he did not quickly decide, they intended to go home: ‘for we did not want to come to see you,

---

saeculi dignitatem . . . a populis eligitur. The election of Sidonius at Clermont had been influenced by similar motives, which were not uncommon in the fifth century.

[1] Ruinart, concerned for the credit of French royalty, says of Merovingian episcopal elections (Preface to his edition of Gregory, § 20): *Verum si Gregorii verba, resque ab eo narratas paullo accuratius perpendamus, eorum temporum disciplinam talem fuisse animadvertemus, quae ita Regum auctoritati providerit, ut canonum ecclesiasticorum vigorem non convelleret.* This is true as to theory, but by no means so as to practice.

[2] III. 2: *Apollinarem ad regem dirigunt.*

but were obliged by the king's diploma.' He then organized a band of poor people, who raised an outcry against the departure of a holy man on whose good works they depended. Pointing to the crowd he said: 'Ye see how I am beloved by these poor! I cannot leave them to go with you.' The reason for his indifference to the offer of Tours was that he had obtained a promise from Prince Chramn, son of Lothar, that on the king's death Cautinus should be ejected from the see.[1]

When Lothar I had agreed to the appointment of Abbot Theodulf as bishop of Le Mans, he changed his mind, and appointed Badegisel, his Mayor of the Palace. Badegisil was granted all the clerical grades almost at once, and, from a layman, became a bishop in forty days (VI. 9).[2] On the death in 584 of Theodosius, bishop of Rodez, there were scandalous disorders; the church was almost stripped of its plate and its more valuable possessions.[3] After a priest named Transobad had been rejected, Innocentius, the infamous count of Javols, was elected 'by the influence of Queen Brunhild'.[4] A curious case of royal interference occurred at Langres during the fatal illness of Bishop Tetricus. King Guntram sanctioned the appointment of Munderic as bishop-designate while Tetricus was still alive. Munderic was sent to bide his time as archpriest at Tonnerre.[5] In 585 Gundovald the pretender,[6] and his abettor Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, ignoring a diploma granted by Chilperic before his death, caused Faustianus, a priest, to be consecrated bishop of Dax. Bertram, not wishing to have all the responsibility in the event of Gundovald's failure, professed inability through an affection of his eyes, and compelled Palladius, bishop of Saintes, to perform the ceremony (VII. 31).

---

[1] IV. 11. He did not succeed in his ambition. As Gregory puts it, a man who could despise the see of Tours was not likely to be granted what he desired. At the next election, the people of Tours chose Eufronius, nephew of Gregory of Langres, and, therefore, of our Gregory's family. Cato appeared upon the scene with the petition that the king (Lothar) should eject Cautinus from the see of Clermont and install him in his place. The king then reminded him of his folly in having refused the offer of Tours, and dismissed him with ignominy. The character of Cautinus proved to be so execrable that the failure of a man whose chief weakness was vanity was a misfortune for Clermont.

[2] The character of this man was infamous (VIII. 39).

[3] VI. 38: *in tantum pro episcopatu intentiones et scandala convaluerunt ut paene sacris ministeriorum vasis et omni facultate meliori nudaretur.*

[4] *Opitulante Brundichilde regina.*

[5] This man intrigued against Guntram, who caused him to be imprisoned in a tower.

[6] Gundovald, claiming at the time to be a king, assumed the right of nominating a bishop.

Sometimes the king's arbitrary intervention was beneficial, putting an end to attempted simony and other scandals. It has already been related on a previous page (p. 58) that after the death of Remigius, bishop of Bourges, in 584, Guntram rebuked the candidates who sought to bribe him, in words of great dignity, declaring that it was not his custom to sell bishoprics for money, and that they should not follow the example of Simon Magus.'[1] He then chose Sulpicius, at the time a layman, a noble Gallo-Roman, poet and man of letters (VI. 39), of whom Gregory clearly approved.[2]

It may be noted that the Byzantine Emperor, who in papal elections sent a diploma, as kings did in the case of bishops,[3] sometimes interfered in an episcopal election and overrode the ordinary rules in the same arbitrary manner as the kings. The Emperor Maurice simply commanded the election of his chosen candidate for the see of Salona in 593-4.[4]

Instances of interference by powerful laymen are naturally rare, because the kings did not tolerate it; but two may be mentioned. On the death of Ferreolus, bishop of Uzès, Dynamius, *rector* (governor) of Provence, put in Albinus, an ex-prefect, without consulting the king at all. This man was upon the point of being removed, when he died. Then Jovinus, a former *rector*, succeeded in getting a nomination from the king, but before effect could be given to it he was anticipated by another candidate, the deacon Marcellus, son of a senatorial family. Marcellus, with the support of Dynamius, was consecrated by the bishops of the diocese, who seem to have obeyed his invitation or summons. His rival Jovinus, who commanded greater resources, shut him up in the city to make the best defence he could. Unable to hold his own by force, he ultimately triumphed by corruption.[1] After Marachar, bishop of Angoulême, had been poisoned by his enemies in the Church,[2] their ringleader, Frontonius, 'at once possessed himself of the see', though divine vengeance carried him off after a year's tenure.[3]

---

[1] *Non est principatus nostri consuetudo sacerdotium venumdare sub pretio, sed nec vestrum eum praemiis comparare, ne et nos turpis lucri infamio notemur, et vos mago Simoni comparamini* (VI. 39). Cf. above, p. 58, where we see that these sonorous words were not always followed by congruous action.

[2] *Ibid.*: *Est enim vir valde nobilis et de primis senatoribus Galliarum, in litteris bene eruditus rhetoricis, in metricis vero artibus nulli secundus*; it was Sulpicius who decided the question of the parishes disputed between Cahors and Rodez (VI. 38).

[3] When Gregory was elected pope by the Romans, their *consensus* was sent to Constantinople and accepted by the Emperor Maurice, who then sent back his diploma (X. 1).

[4] F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 459.

Episcopal interference was generally exerted by the holders of the see, who on becoming feeble sought to secure the choice of their successor by making their last wishes known in favour of their own candidate. This procedure, amounting to undue influence, was sometimes successful, if the dying bishop was a good man and popular.

Maurilius of Cahors, finding, as his end approached, that the competitors for the succession were already appearing in the field, himself selected Ursicinus, formerly referendary of Ultrogotho, queen of Childebert I. Before he died he urged that Ursicinus should be consecrated (V. 42). Domnolus, the holy bishop of Le Mans, on his death-bed chose in advance the abbot Theodulf as his successor. This was the occasion already noted, when King Lothar I assented for the moment, but not long afterwards cancelled his decision and put in Badegisel, Mayor of the Palace, instead (p. 295). Felix, bishop of Nantes, thinking himself likely to die, besought the bishops of the neighbouring sees to confirm his choice of his nephew Burgundio, a young man of twenty-five. The bishops did as he wished, and Burgundio visited Gregory, as metropolitan, requesting him to come to Nantes, in order to tonsure and consecrate him while his uncle was still alive.[4] Gregory refused, laying down the rule established by the canons, that the candidate for a bishopric must first have risen through the lower ecclesiastical grades.[5] Burgundio had better be tonsured by his uncle and prove himself assiduous in his duties in church; on his uncle's death, he would become bishop without difficulty.[6] Bertram of Bordeaux affords another instance of such an attempt. In his last illness he indicated his choice of the deacon Waddo. On the bishop's death, Waddo obtained the *consensus* of the citizens, and went to court, bearing a money bribe. But this time the king was proof against such temptations. He rejected Waddo, and chose Gundegisel, count of Saintes.[1]

---

[1] VI. 7: *Sed cum non valeret, muneribus vicit.*

[2] V. 36: *Iniecto ab inimicis in capite piscis veneno . . . simpliciter accipiens crudeliter enecatur.*

[3] *Ibid.*: *Frontonius, cuius consilio hoc scelus est perpetratum, adsumpto confestim episcopatu, uno in eo degens anno, praecurrente iudicio Dei interiit.*

[4] VI. 15.

[5] *Habemus scriptum in canonibus, fili, non posse quemquam ad episcopatum accedere, nisi prius ecclesiasticus gradus regulariter sortiatur*—a rule frequently violated in practice. Cf. the case of Badegisel, cited above, who passed all the grades in forty days.

[6] *Ibid.*: *Tunc tu facile episcopalem gradum ascendes.* It is evident that 'influence' was admitted by Gregory as a legitimate factor.

The interference of local clergy in episcopal elections was generally due to ambition. A conspicuous example occurred at Clermont. On the death of Gallus at Clermont, the priest, Cato, whose determination to secure the succession to this bishopric has already been mentioned (p. 273), at once received the congratulations of the clergy. He began to control the whole property of the Church and to appoint or dismiss persons as if he were already elected.[2] The provincial bishops present at the burial of Gallus offered terms to this usurper; they were prepared to consecrate him and support his cause at the court of the young Theudebald, where the adverse influence of some person in high place might have endangered his appointment. Cato was too proud and certain of his own merit to accept; the majority of the inhabitants appeared to be on his side, as the bishops themselves admitted, and he felt oversure of his position. He was foolish enough to threaten the archdeacon Cautinus, who hurriedly set out for Metz and announced the death of Gallus to the young king. Theudebald thereupon sanctioned the consecration of the archdeacon at Metz, as bishop of Clermont;[3] when the messengers sent by Cato arrived, they found the matter decided against their principal. The king then sent Cautinus on his way to his see, accompanied by clergy of Clermont and escorted by bishops and royal officials. He was well received by the people of Clermont, despite the supposed adherence of a majority to his rival, and managed to maintain his position in the face of much intrigue. The priest Transobad, formerly archdeacon, relied on securing the bishopric of Rodez because his son was in a position to plead his cause with Gogo, the 'governor' (*nutritor*) of the young king. To increase his chances he gave a banquet to the clergy, at which a priest gave vent to abuse of the deceased bishop. Immediately afterwards he expired and was forthwith buried (V. *46*). On the death of Tetricus, Gregory's brother, Peter, deployed a dangerous activity in securing the election of Sylvester, a connexion of his family, to the see of Langres. His action, by a curious fate, resulted in his own death (V. *5*).

---

[1] VIII. 22. Though in this he again broke a good resolution not to appoint a layman to the see. The action of Dalmatius of Rodez was more legitimate, in so far as he did not seek to impose an individual, but to preserve respect for sound general principles. In his will he adjured King Childebert II not to permit the consecration of a successor from outside the diocese, or of any married man, or of any man not of exemplary character. The will was read before Childebert and his notables, and the archdeacon Theodosius was appointed (V. 46).

[2] *Cato presbyter continuo a clericis de episcopatu laudes accepit et omnem rem ecclesiae, tamquam si iam esset episcopus, in sua redegit potestate, ordinatores removet, ministros respuit, cuncta per se ordinat* (IV. 5). The intractable Cato, who lost the see of Tours by his pride (IV. *11*), was ennobled by the manner of his death during the outbreak of the plague in Auvergne in 571 (IV. 24 (31)).

[3] *Convocatio sacerdotibus apud Metensem civitatem, Cautinus archidiaconus episcopus ordinatur. . . . Tunc ex iussu regis traditis ei clericis et omnia quae hi de rebus ecclesiae exhibuerant, ordinatisque qui cum eodem pergere deberent episcopis et camerariis, Arverno eum direxerunt* (IV. 7).

The intervention of the people in electing or deposing bishops may be illustrated by two cases. The inhabitants of a *civitas* did not always tamely accept or retain bishops of whom they disapproved. Evodius, who as a priest had abused Gallus of Clermont, was actually elected bishop of Javols, but on his appearance there in his new capacity was hunted out of the place.[1] Marcus, bishop of Orleans, was expelled from his city as a result of a false accusation which the people believed.[2] The *auri sacra fames* may have influenced the electors no less than the kings. After the death of Ragnemod, bishop of Paris, in 591, a Syrian merchant (*negotiator*) succeeded by lavish expenditure of bribes in obtaining the bishopric against the priest Faramond, Ragnemod's brother, who was doubtless the official candidate. He dismissed the staff of his predecessor, appointing in their place orientals of his own race (or family).[3] Though we are not told what became of the money, it may be conjectured that the electors received part of it, otherwise they would probably have driven out the Syrian, for the oriental merchant was not a popular figure in Merovingian Gaul.

This section may be closed by two or three exceptional cases of succession to vacant sees. In II. 12 (13) there is a graphic story of the rejection of the candidates put forward by various factions at Clermont. A devout woman intervened, proclaiming a priest outside the factions and revealed to her in a vision as the man chosen by God.[1] Her candidate was adopted. A certain bishop, Amandus by name, was warned by Our Lord in a vision, to give up his bishopric to Severinus, a holy man said to have come from the East. He did so, and Severinus held the see for some time. On his death Amandus resumed the office.[2]

---

[1] *Ita subito contra eum omnis populus consurrexit ut vix vivus possit evadere* (V. P. vi. 4).

[2] *Ibid.* § 5. He was afterwards restored by decree of an episcopal council.

[3] X. 26: *datis multis muneribus in locum eius subrogatus est.*

Councils.[3] The decrees or canons of the episcopal councils, or synods, were the means through which the Church maintained order throughout her dioceses, controlled the clergy, and secured the efficiency of her organization.

The early Gallican councils were not concerned to any great extent with questions of dogma;[4] they rather determined rules of life for the clergy, enjoined religious practices on the people, and sought to protect the property, jurisdiction, and privileges of the Church. They also sat in judgement on members of their own body and on other important persons, practically forming a high court of jurisdiction (p. 307). In view of the large share taken by the bishops in the administration of the country, and their generally superior education, the episcopal council tended to become a political institution; this tendency was less manifest in Gregory's day than at a later time; it increased, after the exhausting wars of the seventh century, when a council of bishops was the only body of men possessing any culture. A king would sometimes convene a council because he felt the need of its moral support, a testimonial to the great political influence wielded by the bishops. Thus Guntram, when war seemed imminent between himself and his brother Sigibert, summoned all the bishops of his kingdom to Paris that he might explain to them the causes of difference.[5] The councils were not always subservient to the royal will. That of Berny refused to condemn Gregory, and even threatened Chilperic himself with excommunication.[1] In that of Paris in 577 (p. 119) Gregory played a man's part against this king, stoutly opposing him in the case of Praetextatus, who received a far milder sentence than Chilperic and his queen desired.[2]

---

[1] *Audite me, Sacerdotes Domini! Scitote enim quod non in his bene placitum est Deo, quos hii ad sacerdotium elegerunt. Ecce enim Dominus hodie ipse sibi providebit antistitem.*

[2] G. C. 44. *Severinus de partibus Orientis ad eandem destinatur urbem* (i. e. Bordeaux).

[3] Cf. H. Leclercq in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', Sect. LVII (references); Fustel de Coulanges, as above, p. 563.

[4] But sometimes theology was discussed, as at Mâcon in 585 (VIII. 20).

[5] IV. 33 (47). Though the summons led to nothing, it proves the reliance of the king upon his bishops. This may have been a mixed Council of State, though nothing is said as to the presence of important laymen.

These councils, attended by the bishops of a whole kingdom, alone had great importance. Provincial councils,[3] summoned by the metropolitan and attended only by the bishops of his province, were naturally of far less significance. By degrees they ceased to be convened, coming to an end in the early part of the seventh century, partly because their decisions had no real validity, partly because the kings disapproved of them; they became useless in face of the royal indifference or hostility; the provincial council, convened by the metropolitan, was beneath the royal notice. We have seen that in a Gaul divided between several kings it sometimes happened that a province had dioceses in more than one kingdom, and that the kings looked with disfavour on the admission to councils representing their realms of bishops owing obedience to another ruler, and with equal dislike on the attendance beyond their frontiers of bishops under their control. The abandonment of the provincial synod was probably welcome to many bishops, who enjoyed more independence through its disappearance. It also conduced to peace in the province, since the metropolitan no longer awakened the jealousy or hatred of those who were practically his equals.

When it happened that almost the whole of Gaul was ruled by a single king, as under Clovis, or under his son Lothar I, a national council could be convened. The Council of Orleans, summoned by Clovis in 511, was the first council of all the bishops in Frankish territory, though it was actually attended by rather less than half their number.[4] Among its thirty-one canons may be mentioned two of special importance: that confirming the extension of the right of sanctuary, as enacted in the Theodosian code (cf. p. 311, n. 2); and that requiring that no free man be received into the Church without the authorization of the king, or the count as his representative (cf. p. 274). While Guntram was acting as guardian of his two nephews, Childebert II and Lothar II, he also was in a position to summon the Austrasian and Neustrian bishops as well as those from his own kingdom of Burgundy. He insisted on doing so even after the Pact of Andelot, though his nephew Childebert was not in favour of this course (IX. 20). Important councils following that of Orleans are those of Epaone (517), Lyons (517), Arles IV (524), Carpentras (527), Orange II (529), Vaison II (529), Marseilles (533), Orleans II (533), Clermont (533), Orleans III (538), IV (541), and V (549), Paris II (552), Arles V (554), Paris III (557), Lyons II (567), Tours II (567), Paris IV (573), Auxerre (578), Mâcon I (583), Lyons III (583), Valence II (584), Mâcon II (585).

---

[1] This punishment they had already inflicted upon Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, Gregory's accuser.

[2] Chilperic threatened Gregory at this council, while Fredegund sent secret messengers to his lodging at night, offering him a large bribe to cease from defending Praetextatus.

[3] The rule was that the metropolitan should summon a synod of his province once a year, but, for the sixth century, we have only two or three mentions of provincial synods, and for the seventh century none at all.

[4] For the text of the Merovingian Councils see F. Maassen, *Concilia aevi Merovingici*, in M. G. H., *Legum Sectio III*, vol. i, *Concilia* (Hanover, 1893); vol. ii of the same section contains the *Concilia aevi Karolini* (742–842),

d. The Church and the Law.

The relation of the Church to the Law was not a simple one. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction stood side by side with that of the State, and affected the lives not merely of ecclesiastics, but of laymen. The bishop held his court in his city, where the count also resided to administer justice in the name of the king; in smaller places the representatives of count and bishop decided minor cases, referring important matters to the two higher courts. Where the bishop and the count were on friendly terms, they arranged controversial questions by consultation and compromise; or the one might voluntarily help the other.[1] Where they were hostile, collision of authority

---

edited by A. Werminghoff. For the oecumenical and other councils see Leclercq's edition of C. J. Héfelé's *Geschichte der Concilien: Histoire des Conciles* (Paris, 1907–11); also Leclercq's summary in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', cols. 457 ff. The great *collectio* of P. Labbe (d. 1667) may be consulted in J. D. Mansi's latest edition: *Sacrosancta Concilia ad regiam editionem exacta* (1759, &c.).

[1] An example of such voluntary help is recorded in VII. 46 (47), where Gregory came to the help of the count in the interests of public peace. A blood feud was raging in the city of Tours; a murder had to be compounded by a money payment (VII. 46 (47)), and financial difficulties were delaying a settlement. Gregory went so far as to offer Church money in order that one of the parties might pay a sufficient *wergeld* to end the vendetta.

was bound to occur.[1] The attitude of the king might aggravate or ease tension; a Chilperic, always jealous of the Church and often conniving at injustice, would take pleasure in setting the counts against the bishops; a Guntram would desire agreement between the secular and ecclesiastical judges. The position between the two courts was further complicated by the fact that the bishop used Roman, the count Frankish law, while the former did not at first try criminal cases.[2] If, therefore, the bishop wished to save a man charged with a criminal offence, he had to intercede with the count, who, if unfriendly, could either refuse him, or place him under an obligation.[3] The coexistence of the secular and ecclesiastical courts had disadvantages, but so long as the secular judges were too often the unscrupulous servants of bad kings, a twofold jurisdiction was better than the concentration of all legal power in the hands of the king's representative; the bishop might sometimes too liberally season justice with mercy, but the count pursued the opposite extreme.[4]

Except when accused on criminal charges, all clerics had the right of trial before the bishop's court. But laymen were allowed to go before it if they so chose, and they often preferred to do so, since the bishop was apt to be regarded as more just. The bishop was the recognized protector of the widow and the orphan, fulfilling thus the functions of the *defensor* in Roman times.[5] Though the episcopal body was not unaffected by the lawlessness and corruption of the age, it enjoyed a character for probity far higher than that of the counts; and bad counts were more numerous than bad bishops. It is interesting to find Lothar I as early as 560 decreeing that in the king's absence the bishops shall be empowered to annul an unjust decision given by a secular judge and to reprimand him for his fault.[1] This was the testimony of a bad man to the integrity of his bishops.

---

[1] In earlier days the bishops sometimes carried matters with a high hand against the counts. Gregory's maternal ancestor, Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, ordered Count Armentarius to abstain from trying cases proper to the episcopal court (V. P. viii. 3).

[2] They did not do so until 614, twenty years after Gregory's death.

[3] But as a rule the count found it to his interest to oblige the bishop. In V. P. viii. 9 we read of a poor beggar's appeal to Phronimius, bishop of Agde, who laid his case before the count, with the result that justice was promptly done. The poor man had partly supported himself by showing an autograph letter of S. Nicetius, which a thief had taken from him. The thief was forced to restore the letter, and in addition to hand over two gold pieces.

[4] But sometimes the people themselves felt that the Church carried lenience too far. When Bishop Eparchius almost persuaded the count of Angoulême to spare the life of a dangerous criminal, they rose in opposition, declaring that if such a man were spared, there would be an end of law and order in the district (VI. 8).

[5] The second Council of Mâcon in 585 denied the right of the secular judge to sentence widows or orphans without first consulting the bishop or the archdeacon. In the widow, the orphan, the slave, the prisoner, the sick, and the maimed, the Church had an honourable roll of clients. In Italy the clergy guilty of lesser criminal offences were tried in the bishop's court by the bishop

In Carolingian times, when the Church was accorded great power in the State, the bishops' courts gained in relative importance. At the Council of Frankfort in 794 it was decreed that when a layman accused a cleric, the bishop and the count should sit together. This common session seems to have been enjoined as a general rule in a capitulary of Charles the Great dating from 805–6. In the last years of his reign Charles deliberately exalted the bishop at the expense of the count, decreeing that any one had the right to take his case into the bishop's court, whatever his adversary might say, and that there should be no appeal from the bishop's decision.[2]

The episcopal council (p. 300) served as a higher court by which bishops themselves were tried, a bishop being amenable to no court but one composed of his peers.[3] In the History we read several cases of such trials. In one of these Gregory himself figured, when he was accused by Count Leudast of having slandered Queen Fredegund (V. *47*). The most interesting and dramatic was the trial of Praetextatus of Rouen, whom King Chilperic, prompted by Fredegund, accused of illegally marrying his son Merovech to the widowed Queen Brunhild,

---

or his representative. If, however, the offence was serious, they could be brought into the lay courts; but here the bishop could personally intercede if he chose to do so, and was usually granted his request. Clerics could be brought into the secular court on civil matters if they were in dispute with a layman, unless both parties agreed to receive the sentence of the bishop's court (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, p. 391).

[1] *Dipl. et chart. merov. aetatis*, Paris, 1848, i, p. 121.

[2] This was towards 811. This extreme measure was justified by the enormous abuse of power on the part of the counts and their subordinates. Charles had no illusions as to the perfection of bishops in his day, 'but he considered their justice somewhat less bad than that of the State' (Martin, *Hist. de France*, ii, p. 361).

[3] A law of Justinian enacted that bishops could not be brought before secular courts, even on the gravest charges, unless the emperor so decided; they were to be tried by the patriarch or the pope, or by metropolitans (Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, p. 391).

and of having acted in Austrasian interests to the detriment of his own country (V. 12 (18)). In connexion with this trial we note two interesting points: the king appears in person as chief accuser, taking adroit, if unscrupulous, measures to secure a condemnation;[1] the bishops actually order their brother bishop to be flogged for trying to escape from detention, before being banished to the island of Jersey. Two cases brought before episcopal councils were connected with the attempt of Gundovald, the Pretender. In one, Ursicinus, bishop of Cahors, was forbidden for three years: *missas celebrare, clericos ordinare ecclesiasque et chrisma benedicere*, because he had given public support to the Pretender's cause (VI. 8). In the other, the bishops assembled in Council at Mâcon in 585 punished three of their number, Bertram of Bordeaux, Orestes of Bazas, and Palladius of Saintes for consecrating Faustianus bishop of Aix at the Pretender's request; the punishment shows that the bishops realized the meaning of poetic justice, or perhaps that they possessed a sense of humour: they ordered the three accused bishops each to support Faustianus, now ejected from his see, for a third of the year, and to make him an annual payment of a hundred pieces of gold (VIII. 20).

The decrees (*canons*) of the numerous Gallican Councils formed a body of law for the regulation of clerical conduct; they were enactments intended to preserve discipline in the Church. Each Frankish king convened in Council the bishops of his own kingdom, and the canons issued by these Councils were valid only there; the claim of universal validity could only be made for canons of the greater, or oecumenical Church Councils, but these were not regularly consulted in Merovingian Gaul and perhaps imperfectly known. The Gallican canons were ill classified and ill registered, which explains the success of such manipulations as that of Chilperic. Indeed, the canons which the Merovingian clergy had to obey must have been known in their entirety by very few persons. Local ecclesiastical law was in no small confusion. No unity was attained in France until the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 802 imposed as authoritative the *Liber Canonicus*, a collection in two parts formed by the monk Dionysius the Scythian.[1] This had been presented by Hadrian I to Charles the Great before he succeeded his father. It remained the only official Code of the Roman Church until the work of the reforming movement in the eleventh century.

---

[1] Praetextatus was intimidated into making a confession. The king then surreptitiously added to the book of Gallican canons, which did not contain any decree suitable for his purpose, a new 'quaternion' containing a canon ordering the degradation of any bishop convicted of homicide, adultery, or perjury. The trick was clever, for this canon, though not Gallican, was genuine. It is No. 21 of the *Collectio Dionysiana* (F. Maassen, *Quellen der Lit. des canonischen Rechts*, i, p. 439). Gregory protested that it was not contained in the collection of canons used in Gaul, which the king had promised to respect. Praetextatus was ultimately banished for a period to the Channel Islands. Chilperic had demanded that his tunic should be rent, that the eighth Psalm should be read over him, and that he should be excommunicated. After Chilperic's death, the bishop was restored to his see (VII. 16). The trial of bishop Egidius ended in the banishment of that treacherous prelate by the Council of Metz (X. 19).

The episcopal council seems to have been used by the kings to decide misdemeanours and political offences too serious for the counts to judge and perhaps inconvenient for the king's own court. Great personages whose conduct exposed them to the suspicion of treason might sometimes avoid the verdict of such a tribunal if they cleared themselves in advance by oath after the manner permitted alike in ecclesiastical and secular law (cf. p. 209). If the ordeal resulted favourably for the accused, anticipation of this kind could hardly fail to prevent a formal discussion of the case by a court composed of bishops, for such oaths were invariably taken in churches before the tombs of the most venerated saints, whose verdict the prelates would never think of calling in question. The king was equally bound by the spiritual verdict; even he was compelled to accept the decision of the saints as final, however contrary to his own wishes it might happen to be. Thus when Guntram fantastically accused Queen Brunhild of supporting the Visigoths against him, threatening Paris from Soissons, and even projecting a marriage with a son of the Pretender Gundovald, she was allowed to clear herself by oath. The king had convened a council of bishops to judge her on the above charges, and they would certainly have met had not the queen anticipated their meeting, and sworn before they could come together (IX. 32). Probably the same course was adopted when Fredegund[2] cleared herself in a spectacular way by

---

[1] The first part was a translation of fifty Apostolic constitutions from the Greek; the second embodied documents containing local ecclesiastical, but not Gallican law.

[2] Guntram had accused her of having borne the young Lothar not to King Chilperic but to some notable of Neustria.

compurgation, bringing a great number of important persons to witness her oath and swear with her that she was innocent ;[1] she was accompanied by no less than three bishops and three hundred notables of Neustria (VIII. 9). We may guess that, like Brunhild, Fredegund forestalled the reference of her case to an episcopal council. It was natural that a bishop arraigned before his peers assembled in Council should be given the privilege of clearing himself by oath, as Gregory himself did when falsely accused by Leudast (V. 49).[2]

Secular cases which might seem to have been capable of settlement by such common methods as the infliction of an ordinary fine, were also brought before an episcopal council, if the persons concerned were in a high position. Tetradia, who on leaving her first husband Eulalius, had taken away with her portable property belonging to him, and subsequently married Duke Desiderius, was accused, after the duke's death, by Eulalius, now count of Clermont, before an episcopal council held in Auvergne (X. 8). She was condemned to refund four times the value, but allowed to return to Auvergne and enjoy her own property in Clermont. This case seems to show that overlapping was no less likely to occur in the work of the high ecclesiastical and secular courts than in the lower courts of bishop and count. There seems no obvious reason why Tetradia should not have been accused before a secular court, the charge being one of converting another person's property to her own use.[3] But if intending litigants had the option, they may have often preferred to take their cases before the bishops, who, as we have seen, were qualified to deal with secular as well as religious cases. It has been noted above that both early and late in Frankish history the kings themselves preferred that the bishops should have the final word, knowing that they were more likely to be just and impartial than the law officers of the Crown (p. 304). Other people probably shared the royal opinion.

---

[1] So the wicked Pelagius brought twelve men to clear him by oath of having wronged the Church at Tours. Gregory, however, was finally satisfied with the oath of Pelagius alone (VIII. 40). For compurgation cf. C. Galy, *La famille à l'époque mérov.*, p. 224.

[2] Gregory both took an oath and celebrated mass at three altars.

[3] She could not be brought before the count's court at Clermont because the count was himself the plaintiff.

It sometimes happened that a case arose in which more than one Merovingian kingdom was interested, and the episcopal council of one kingdom was no longer adequate. In this event, two kings might nominate a joint tribunal drawn from the bishops of their several kingdoms. Thus Guntram and his nephew Childebert II united to appoint a commission of bishops from their respective kingdoms [1] to try the rebellious nuns of Poitiers, and effect a reform according to the canons.[2]

The power of inflicting fines and corporal punishment possessed by the episcopal councils was also possessed by individual bishops in the punishment of their clergy and of others. Certain clerics of Saintes, encouraged by Bertram, who had quarrelled with Palladius, had defamed their bishop. As soon as Bertram was dead, Palladius had them stripped of their possessions and flogged (VIII. 22). After the murder of Praetextatus at Rouen, Leudovald, bishop of Bayeux, ordered suspected men to be tortured, in order to extract the truth from them.[3] But the most effective sanctions were of an ecclesiastical nature. The above-mentioned Leudovald closed all the churches in Rouen until he had investigated the murder, so that no baptisms or burials could legally take place. Excommunication was the natural weapon of the Church against offenders great or small,[4] a weapon which often found its mark when material means were unavailing.

The Church, attempting as she did to follow at the same time divine injunctions and human codes, could not avoid frequent conflict with secular justice, not merely on account of disagreements between bishops and counts, but on general principles. This chiefly occurred by her action in releasing persons imprisoned by the king's judges, and by her grant of sanctuary to guilty or condemned men. The bishops, mindful of biblical precept,[1] had a fixed policy in favour of prisoners and captives. In this they followed the example of the former saints, repeated for them as they believed in their own day by apparitions of these holy men, or through the agency of their remains and relics. The counts, who shared the same belief, would acquiesce in the defeat of the king's justice by this miraculous interference from fear of saintly vengeance, and suffer the annulment of their own decisions. Thus when prisoners at Clermont escaped into a church after the supernatural breaking of their fetters, and the opening of the prison door, Count Eulalius made one effort to put new chains on them, but, when these broke 'like glass', yielded to the intervention of Bishop Avitus, and granted their release (X. 6). We need only cite one or two examples of the belief in the liberative power of the saints exerted from their tombs. The body of Germanus, carried through the city of Paris, grew heavy, as a gang of prisoners passed, and could only be lifted again with ease after they had been liberated (V. 5 (8)). Later, his apparition set prisoners free (VIII. 33). At the tomb of S. Nicetius, who succeeded Maximin as bishop of Trèves, the bonds of prisoners constantly fell from their limbs;[2] at that of S. Médard at Soissons, Gregory declares that he himself had seen fetters broken.[3] Such cases must have been embarrassing and vexatious to the secular authority when the real criminal and the miscreant were set free. They cannot but have strained the relations between the representatives of the State and Church.

---

[1] X. 15. They were: Maroveus, bishop of Poitiers, Beregisel, bishop of Cologne, Gregory, bishop of Tours, and Gundegisel, bishop of Bordeaux, with his suffragans (*cum provincialibus suis*), Gundegisel being metropolitan of Poitiers.

[2] *Ut scilicet episcopi, coniuncti de utroque regno, haec quae gerebantur sanctione canonice emendarent.*

[3] *Quibus supplicio subditis veritatem extorsit* (VIII. 31).

[4] Religious sanctions extended beyond the sphere of formal jurisdiction. The vengeance of the saints was shown to descend upon those who wronged the Church or offended against her precepts. When a violent enemy died a sudden death, the fact was often assigned to the *virtus*, or miraculous power, of a saint. Miraculous interference with the laws of nature was also claimed in order to dismay the tempted from breaches of religious rule. The hand of a man grinding corn on a Sunday was fixed to the handle of the mill until released by the power of S. Martin (V. S. M. iv. 55). A woman working on the Sabbath found the fingers of her hand contracted and fixed to her palm (*ibid.* iv. 55). A man trying to get in his hay on a wagon is blinded, and not healed until the expiration of a year (*ibid.* v. 45). The sin on the part of the fathers was even visited upon the children; Gregory says that children engendered on the Sabbath grow up leprous, epileptic, or deformed (*ibid.* ii. 24). For Sabbath-breaking cf. A. Marignan, as above, **i**, **p.** 273.

The privilege of sanctuary was granted by the Gallican Church of Merovingian times without regard to the character of the fugitive or the nature of his offence. Notorious evil livers and men charged with treason were protected at Tours by Gregory himself, the bishop insisting that no one who once crossed the threshold of S. Martin could be claimed by the secular power so long as he remained within the precincts. Nothing but the royal fear of the powerful saint could have prevented serious trouble when Gregory shielded there the rebellious prince Merovech, son of Chilperic, the abominable Guntram Boso, who had slain the same king's eldest son,[1] and Eberulf, Chilperic's chamberlain, doubtfully accused, after the king's death, of complicity in his murder, but a man of the worst possible reputation. Any one of these cases might have had serious consequences for the Church but for the usual acceptance by the kings of the right to sanctuary. Of this acceptance the History gives more than one proof. When Sunnegisel, marshal to Childebert, and Gallomagus, his referendary, were implicated in a plot against the royal house, and had taken sanctuary, the king went in person to the church and promised them their lives if they came out to stand their trial. He plainly stated his own opinion that even the guilty should not be punished if removed from sanctuary.[2] Chilperic himself implicitly admitted the ecclesiastical claim when, in order to prevent Merovech's return to sanctuary at Tours, he caused all the doors of S. Martin's church but one to be closed and guarded (V. 12 (18)).

---

[1] Cf. Ps. cxlvi.

[2] G. C. 92. Any perjurer was instantly punished (*ilico divina ultione corrigitur*) at this tomb.

[3] *Ibid.* 93: *saepe conpedes miserorum confractos.* S. Médard died in 567. In *Carm.* ii. 16. Fortunatus relates the saint's life, including his miracles of liberation.

But it occasionally happened that royal personages allowed their anger to overcome their fears, especially when the local bishop was a less resolute opponent than Gregory. Though it was regarded as impious to kill a man in church, Prince Chramn, the rebel son of Lothar I, nearly succeeded in compassing the death by starvation of Duke Austrapius while in sanctuary at Tours (IV. 12 (18)); the same prince sent emissaries to entice from sanctuary and carry off by violence two persons who were obnoxious to him (IV. 8 (13)). Queen Fredegund did not hesitate to authorize the murder of Eberulf in the church of S. Martin (VII. 29), though the more scrupulous Guntram, employing the same emissary for the same purpose, stipulated that the victim must first be lured out of the precincts.[1] Queen Brunhild, outraged by the scandalous conduct of Leudast while in sanctuary at Poitiers, caused him to be dragged out by force (V. *49*). King Childebert's piety and patience were both exhausted when the open traitors Ursio and Berthefred took sanctuary, with wives, children, and property, in a church dedicated to S. Martin in the Woevre. His commander, besieging the church, had doubtless the royal sanction for setting it on fire and slaying Ursio; nor did the king disavow the destruction of Berthefred, who on that occasion managed to escape, in the very oratory of the bishop of Verdun (IX. 12).

---

[1] V. 4, 14. Chilperic sent Duke Roccolen to demand the surrender of Boso; the demand was at once refused by Gregory. Women often resorted to sanctuary. Immediately after King Chilperic's murder, Fredegund took refuge at Paris, taking with her all the royal treasure on which she could lay hands (VII. 4). While in sanctuary she behaved in her usual violent and arbitrary manner, treating the Domestic Leunard with indignity: she was accompanied by Count Audo, who, during the king's lifetime, had given her much evil counsel (VII. 15). Fredegund's daughter, Rigunth, sought the protection of the Church at Toulouse (VII. 10), as did the wife of Ragnovald when her husband fled to Spain (VI. 7 (12)). The wife of Duke Rauching took sanctuary as soon as news reached her of her husband's death (IX. 9). Guntram Boso, who knew how to extract the full advantage from the hospitality of the Church, placed his daughters in safety first at Tours, afterwards at Poitiers, not hesitating to use armed force in their removal (V. 17 (24)) when it suited his convenience that they should come out.

[2] IX. 38. He concluded with these words: *nefas est enim vel criminosos ab ecclesia eductos puniri.*

The case of Eberulf proved the sincerity of ecclesiastical belief that sanctuary should be respected without discrimination, for this man had wantonly despoiled property belonging to the very church of S. Martin in which he took refuge. Yet he was given quarters in the vestry of the basilica, allowed a retinue of servants, and permitted to indulge to the full his zest for eating and drinking,[2] in return for which he behaved in an outrageous fashion. But the theory that the Church should extend unlimited protection to every person in need, whatever his guilt, was questionable in itself and opposed to her true interest. This was perceived by Pope Gregory the Great, who wisely imposed restrictions on the privilege of sanctuary. He decided that it must never be allowed to screen malefactors, but must only be granted in the service of equity and justice.[1] Free men who had taken refuge were to be persuaded to go out as soon as the Church had obtained for them a promise of fair trial, the bishop of the diocese personally holding himself responsible for their safety.[2] Fugitive slaves guilty of slight offences were to be surrendered if their owners would give a solemn promise that they should be pardoned; failure to redeem this promise was to be punished by excommunication.[3] The Pope's conception of the uses which might properly be served by sanctuary was wider and wiser than that of the Gallican bishops; it better reconciled the principles of humanity and justice.

---

[1] *Ne sanctae basilicae iniuriam inferas omnino commoneo* (VII. 26 (29)). The injunction proved vain, for the emissary, Claudius, committed the murder in the *atrium*. Gregory had already tried to frighten Eberulf into decent behaviour by a dream of his own, in which he foresaw the arrival of King Guntram to carry out his removal by violence. Eberulf had been frequently drunk, and on one occasion threatened to kill a priest who refused to give him more wine. He had also caused scandalous uproar in the church itself.

[2] The freedom allowed to important persons amounted to a grave abuse. The whole precinct of the church was regarded as inviolable, the Theodosian Code having extended the right of sanctuary to the *atrium*, with the buildings round it. Thus a wealthy refugee might be housed with his servants, enjoy all the comforts of his ordinary life, and walk at large in the open air. Sometimes, when conditions were for the moment favourable, such refugees would even venture beyond the precincts, the clergy not being able to control their actions. Leudast, the infamous ex-count of Tours, when in sanctuary at Poitiers, was in the habit of going out into the town, entering private houses, and robbing them of things which pleased him (V. *49*); when he confined himself to the precincts he was openly guilty of immoral conduct there. Eberulf invited his destined assassin Claudius to dine with him (*ad convivium*), and

The solemn oath before an altar or the relics of a saint (p. 306) was recognized by Church law as settling the question of guilt or innocence even in cases which had never come into court. Many are the stories told by Gregory of perjuries visited by sudden death or grievous affliction for taking false oaths at the tomb of a saint, or at the altar, or before relics. The procedure in taking the oath was to raise the hand, and to pronounce the words, standing in front of the altar. A curious case is that of the lady shop-thief of Albi, who, on raising her hands to swear before the tomb of S. Eugenius, found herself rigidly fixed, her feet cleaving to the ground. Her accuser, after a few scornful words, went off leaving her in this awkward position.[4] Sometimes the saint failed to take action

---

the text shows that there was abundance of good fare and good wine (VII. 22). In the same way Prince Merovech invited Gregory to dine with him, on the occasion when the bishop read him a text of evil omen (V. 8).

[1] *Epp.* i. 35; ix. 4, 182; x. 17; xi. 4, 16.

[2] *Ibid.* x. 16.

[3] *Ibid.* iii. 1. A similar procedure with regard to slaves obtained in Gaul. In the *decretio* of Lothar I contained in a pact between him and his brother Childebert I, Article 15 deals with the case of a slave who has taken sanctuary. As soon as the slave's master comes, the slave must be surrendered, but only as *excusatus*, and on condition that he is not to be killed (M. G. H., *Legum*, Sect. I, vol. i (1883), ed. A. Boretius, p. 2).

[4] *Speciem sibi aptam aspiciens, a negotiatore suscepit. Et statim dicto citius*

against perjurers. The father of a woman charged with adultery agreed with her accusers to take an oath that she was innocent on the tomb of S. Denis near Paris. He did so, without any sign of the saint's displeasure.[1]

e. Church Property and Revenue.

Despite occasional efforts of kings to stay the process,[2] the Church grew richer and richer with the passage of time. Men repentant of crimes wished to buy salvation by request or gift of land; peaceable or defenceless people secured themselves by 'recommendation' to a church or monastery. It grew a common practice to bequeath land, and to receive permission to hold it for life as a 'benefice' (p. 163). Thus estates were always falling in, and even in Gregory's time, great tracts of Gaul were included into the patrimony of the Church.[3] By the end of the seventh century, the Church was believed to hold

---

porrectam alteri negat se accepisse. The accuser's final words are: *Prosit tibi, virgo, haec species quam tulisti; mihi sufficit ultio data per martyrem* (G. M. 57). A good typical example is to be read in G. M. 19. In the church of the Virgin and S. John at Tours: *quidam cum ad periurandum in hac ecclesia fuisset ingressus, et ubi manus, ante altare stans, sursum extulit ut sacramentum mendax proferret, statim resupinus ruens*, &c. This man fractured, or almost fractured, his skull, and was taken up half dead, whereupon he confessed that he had lied. In another case, at Bourges, a man, while affirming before the blood of S. Stephen that his innocent neighbours had perjured themselves, underwent a like experience (G. M. 33). In the church of S. Pancras at Rome, an intending perjurer was seized by a demon, flung to the ground, and killed before he had even time to reach the *cancelli* before the altar (*ibid.* 38). A thief, thinking to avert suspicion from himself, entered the church of S. Martin to swear his innocence. On the very threshold, his axe slipped from his hand, and he fell to the ground, suffering acute pain in the heart, after which he confessed his guilt (VIII. 16). A man justly suspected of arson attempted in like manner to clear himself. Gregory prevented his entrance, bidding him stand outside, facing the church, and swear. He did so, when a blinding fire from heaven deprived him of his sight; soon afterwards he died, after admitting his guilt and S. Martin's power. Another case of supernatural punishment is recorded in VIII. 40: a rustic perjurer at the tomb of S. Martial lost his speech and was reduced to bleating like a sheep (G. C. 28).

[1] V. *32*. In this case his adversaries charged him with perjury, and a sanguinary brawl ensued. The unhappy woman hanged herself when afterwards summoned to appear before a court of justice.

[2] Lothar I attempted to exact a third part of her revenues from the Church in Touraine, but was compelled to desist through the opposition of Bishop Injuriosus and his own fear of S. Martin. Charibert actually seized a piece of Church land and defiantly held it till he died; but his death was considered to have been hastened by this act, and the land was restored by King Sigibert.

[3] Church land in Italy was sometimes leased for long terms to private persons who cultivated it at a fixed rent. This was lease by *emphyteusis*, generally extended to two heirs of the original tenant.

one third part of Gaul.[1] The saints were held to intervene from the tomb to protect Church property. Thus S. Remi smote with paralysis a man who had seized a piece of fertile land given to his church at Reims by a devout person. The man sought to obtain a cure by offering gifts; but these were of no avail, and he perished (G. C. 78).

Examples of gifts or bequest are numerous; we may cite a few from the History.

Clotild, widow of Clovis, in her later years devoted herself to good works, and presented to churches, monasteries, and holy places the lands of which they stood in need.[2] After suppressing the revolt in Champagne in 576, Chilperic gave to the church of S. Médard at Soissons the estates in the Soissonais which he had previously given to Godin, a leader of the movement.[3] Beretrude, wife of Duke Launebod of Toulouse, bequeathed in 589 part of her property to nunneries founded by herself, and to churches (IX. 35). Contemplated bequests to the Church were often opposed, and sometimes prevented, by relatives. Thus Lupus, a citizen of Tours, who had lost wife and children, proposed to join the Church, in which case his property would have followed him. His brother Ambrose therefore sought another wife for him, though the lives of both brothers were cut short before they could agree (VI. *13*).

The Roman practice with regard to the division of Church revenues assigned one part to the bishop; one for stipends to the clergy; one for the poor; and the fourth part to a fund for the building and repair of churches; this rule was decreed by Pope Gelasius (492–6).[4] The bishop controlled the distribution of the part granted to the clergy; persons in minor orders received their proportionate share. The part assigned to the poor was spent in direct charity to persons on the *matricula* (p. 276), alms being distributed at the church, and in keeping up hospitals. Money spent in redeeming captives or enfranchising slaves may have come from the bishop's share, as may any necessary legal expenses. The general administration of Church property in a diocese was entrusted to the archdeacon, though local administration was carried out by agents (*agentes*, *actores*) appointed for the purpose.[1] These agents, or bailiffs, supervised the cultivation or exploitation of the farms, vineyards, and pastures.[2] Bishops seem to have been allowed discretion in disposing of Church property for a good purpose. Thus the bishop of Lyons presented to Quintianus, the banished bishop of Rodez, part of the property belonging to his own diocese in Auvergne.[3] We find bishops taking an active interest in the land. Aetherius, bishop of Lisieux, when he so nearly met his death, was watching the labourers ploughing (VI. *36*). It is probable that this was upon Church land rather than the bishop's own property.

---

[1] Pfister, in Lavisse, as above, p. 233. The Church also received valuable gifts in money or precious objects—jewellery, plate, silk textiles—offered by kings and wealthy persons. Such treasures tempted the unscrupulous in a lawless age, and occasionally we read of the plundering of a wealthy church. But awe of the *virtus*, or miraculous power, wielded by the great saints whose shrines were richest, generally held back even the reckless, for there were many stories of supernatural vengeance wreaked on the sacrilegious; there were, however, exceptions, like Eberulf (VII. 22).

[2] III. 18: *praedia ecclesiis, monasteriis vel quibuscumque locis sanctis necessaria praevidit.* Her prayers to S. Martin against internecine war between her son Childebert I and her grandson Theudebert on one side, and her other son Lothar on the other, resulted in a miraculous storm through which Lothar was saved (III. 28).

[3] V. 3. It was a rare thing for this king to perform such an action; his reputation was that of a despoiler rather than that of a benefactor.

[4] Labbe, *Concilia*, iv, p. 1195. Gregory the Great instructed Augustine to

Tithe[4] was claimed by the Merovingian Church, and was doubtless paid by the faithful, though the State gave no aid in securing payment, and the Church relied on its own sanctions against the recalcitrant; thus the council of Mâcon in 585 ordered tithes to be paid under pain of excommunication.[5]

---

follow it in England (*Ep.* xi. 56 a). Offerings received in church were also divided.

[1] Cf. VII. 22 (*ecclesiae actores, agentes*). The archdeacon might have the assistance of a chief steward (*oeconomus*). In Italy the great patrimony of S. Peter involved a hierarchy of officials, the senior administrator in each district, the *Rector Patrimonii*, and his subordinate, *Defensor*, having great power. In the small parts of the Patrimony in Gaul (Marseilles and Arles) local bishops at first acted as Rectors of the Pope (Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 298).

[2] Lands let on the beneficial system to cultivators would be independent of this supervision.

[3] II (36): *largitus est ei aliqua possessionis ecclesiae suae quam in Arverno habebat.* Such a gift, even if the recipient held the land as a benefice, would normally have required the consent of the clergy of Lyons.

[4] P. Viard, *Hist. de la dîme ecclésiastique, principalement en France*, Dijon, 1909.

[5] Before this time the obligation to pay a tenth had often been recognized as a matter of conscience, but had not been enacted or enforced. The clergy would sometimes use a bad season to point a moral against those who refused tithe. They did this even after tithe-paying was made compulsory, for there were always defaulters. When in 792 there was a very bad harvest, the

The kings did not regularly help the Church in the matter of tithe-collection until Charles the Great, in 779, formally established the tithe as a charge the payment of which was to be enforced by the secular arm.[1] Tithes, which were paid in kind, were divided, like other revenue, between the bishop, the clergy, the poor, and the fund for maintaining church fabrics; the parish priests were responsible for their collection and division.

The Church was sometimes released by a royal act of grace from payment of tax in certain regions, especially those under the protection of a powerful saint.

Theudebert soon after his accession remitted the taxation of churches in Auvergne.[2] Lothar I claimed for the royal treasury one-third of the harvests from Church lands. The bishops of all the other dioceses reluctantly submitted, but Injuriosus of Tours refused, and he so frightened a king already in fear enough of the 'virtue' of S. Martin, that instead of having to pay, he was actually offered gifts, on the sole condition of securing for this evil king the favour of the all-powerful saint.[3] S. Martin had the credit of defending the clergy of Tours against every royal attempt to make his people pay the *tributum*; in like manner S. Martial protected Limoges. Even to speak of such imposition with approval, or to insinuate that the saints were impoverishing the king, was enough to bring condign vengeance on the head of the critic. When Leo of Poitiers, *qui tanquam leo erat in omni cupiditate saevissimus*, dared thus to insinuate,[4] Gregory says that he was struck deaf and dumb, and died raving. In 590 Childebert II made a sweeping remission of taxes to the Church in Clermont. The churches and monasteries were to pay nothing, and all clerics, indeed any persons exercising any functions in connexion with the Church, were absolved.[5] This was partly through the

---

Council of Frankfort declared that the grain had been devoured by evil spirits, because the people had not paid their tithes.

[1] Pepin had ordered their payment in 765.

[2] III. 25: *omni tributo quod fisco suo . . . reddebatur clementer indulsit.*

[3] IV. 2: *Chlothacharius rex indixerat ut omnes eclesiae regni sui tertiam partem fructuum fisco dissolverent. Quod, licet inviti, cum omnes episcopi consensissent atque subscripsissent, viriliter hoc beatus Iniuriosus respuens, subscribere dedignatus est, dicens,* &c.

[4] *Hic fertur quadam vice dixisse, quod Martinus et Martialis, confessores Domini, nihil fisci viribus utile reliquissent* (IV. 10 (16)).

[5] X. 7: *In supradicta urbe Childebertus rex omnem tributum tam ecclesiis*

'large piety' of the king; but it is noted that the *exactores* had long found it almost impossible to get in money, owing to the continual transference and subdivision of property. The king had a second motive: he did not wish tax-collecting to be regarded as an occupation necessarily involving the contractor in loss.[1]

---

quam monasteriis vel reliquis clericis qui ad ecclesiam pertinere videbantur, aut quicumque ecclesiae officium excolebat, larga pietate concessit.

[1] *Multum enim iam exactores huius tributi exspoliati erant, eo quod per longum tempus et succedentum generationes, ac divisis in multis partibus ipsis possessionibus, colligi vix poterat hoc tributum.*

III

THE CHURCHES AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

a. The Fabrics. Interments and Burial Grounds.

THE construction of churches in the Gallican dioceses was continued throughout the Merovingian period. The proportion of bishops of Tours who distinguished themselves as church-builders is high (cf. X. 31); and though Tours was a richer diocese than most, there is evidence enough that construction was frequent elsewhere. Leontius, bishop of Bordeaux (542–66 ?) and predecessor of Bertram, Felix of Nantes, Gregory himself, and Kings Childebert I and Guntram, were all noted builders of the sixth century.[1] The church built by Childebert I at Paris is of especial interest because the present church of S.-Germain-des-Prés has a direct historic connexion with it, though no part of the original structure remains. It was erected by Childebert as the church of S. Vincent, to receive the stole of that saint, given him by the citizens of Saragossa for raising the siege of the city during his invasion of Spain recorded by Gregory.[2] It was for a time also called the church of the Holy Cross when Childebert placed in it a gold cross set with gems obtained by him after his victory over the Visigothic King Amalaric (III. 29). At a later time it was finally dedicated to S. Germain, when that saint was buried within its walls. It contained the tombs of several members of the Merovingian royal line and their queens: Childebert I with Ultrogotho his queen; Chilperic and Fredegund; Lothar II, son of Chilperic, and his queen Bertrud.[3] Fortunatus describes Childebert's church as a fine basilica, with marble columns, gilded ceiling, and glazed windows.[1] The same writer mentions a number of other churches built and restored by Merovingian bishops. Thus Sidonius, bishop of Mayence, built a baptistery there, with the aid of a princess, daughter of Theudebert;[2] he also built a church in honour of S. George.[3] Trafaric built an oratory in honour of SS. Peter, Paul, Martin, and Remi.[4] Fortunatus praises Felix, bishop of Nantes, for the church which he erected.[5] It had 'in the middle' a turret (p. 324) covered outside with tin, and apparently painted within; the roof was a ceiling, or *lacunar*. We are told that Ageric, bishop of Verdun, restored old churches and erected new ones,[6] as did Chronopius of Périgueux.[7] Such passages as these show that there was considerable building activity in Gaul, and that the bishops of Tours had rivals in other dioceses. Clerics of lower rank were sometimes able to build churches. For example, Wulfolaic (S. Walfroy), when a deacon, erected one at Yvois-Carignan in the Ardennes (VIII. 15).

---

[1] The churches of the fourth and fifth centuries were often hurriedly erected and had soon fallen into decay, so that repair and reconstruction were always necessary. Cf. A. Marignan, as above, ii, pp. 135 ff. Hardly anything survives of Merovingian building. The only authentic remains are the baptistery of S. John at Poitiers, parts of the crypt of S. Paul at Jouarre (though here there has been restoration), and of the crypt of S. Laurence at Grenoble (cf. C. Enlart, in A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, i, pt. i, pp. 110, 111).

[2] It is said that Childebert was moved to raise the siege after S. Vincent's tunic had been carried round the walls by the besieged, but he had been defeated by the Goths before the city. Fortunatus liberally praises this king as a generous patron of the Church, styling him 'Our Melchizedek' (cf. p. 48).

[3] Ruinart, in an Appendix to his edition of Gregory's works entitled *De regali abbatia Sancti Germani a pratis prope Parisios*, col. 1309 ff., has an

Many of the earliest churches in Gaul must have been erected over tombs of saints, which in some cases, as in that of the tomb of S. Martin, had already been protected by a humble structure of more perishable material than stone. The tomb of S. Médard was first covered by a *cellula* of wattle before a church was erected over it.[8] Bishop Monulf erected a permanent church over the small wooden building placed above the tomb of Aravatius, bishop of Tongres, who

---

interesting account of the Church and the royal tombs which it contained in his time. Several of these had figures of the kings and queens in low relief, apparently added about the eleventh century. He himself believed the tombstone of Fredegund, of which he gives an illustration, to be her original monument, but this opinion is not now accepted. The history and literature relating to the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés will be found in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, Article, 'Germain-des-Prés, Saint,' by H. Leclercq; some of the earliest facts are derived from the Life of S. Droctoveus. The history of the church and abbey has been written by Bouillart. The cathedral church of Paris, the site of which adjoined that of Nótre Dame, was built about the same time as the church of S. Vincent, and was similar in size and splendour. See P. Batiffol, *Études de liturgie et d'arch. chrétienne* (Paris, 1919), pp. 216 ff. *L'église cathédrale de Paris au VI^e siècle.*

[1] Fortunatus, *Carm.* ii. 14.

[2] *Ibid.* 15.

[3] *Ibid.* 16.

[4] *Ibid.* 17.

[5] III. 17.

[6] Fortunatus, *Carm.* iii. 29. Ageric is several times mentioned in the History.

[7] *Ibid.* iv. 8.

[8] G. C. 93: *cellula minutis contexta virgultis.* Chips or splinters of this wattle-work were in after years carried off to cure toothache.

died in the fifth century.[1] More often, perhaps, the site afterwards filled by a brick or stone church had first been occupied by an oratory or small church of wood. Various wooden churches are mentioned by Gregory; and in poor districts, or if used as oratories where there was no regular congregation, such structures remained unaltered.[2] The walls seem to have been composed of planks (*tabulae*) fixed to vertical wooden posts or columns. Such was the construction of the church on the walls of Rouen where the runaways, Merovech and Brunhild, took refuge from the prince's angry father Chilperic.[3]

The church building was a centre of common life, not only religious but sometimes so very secular that the bishops had to make protest. Thus Hunachar, bishop of Auxerre at the end of the sixth century, urged the interdiction of dances, festivals, and secular music.[4] The church was used for legal purposes such as the drawing up of documents, wills, and deeds of gift;[5] slaves were enfranchised before the altar or in the porch (p. 394); the bishop held his court in the vestry, or *secretarium*,[6] which sometimes even accommodated persons temporarily quartered in the building. In country districts attempts were made to use the church as a granary or store for hay; while in time of invasions or raids it served the people as a repository for movable property, deemed more safe there than elsewhere. The altar, especially if it enclosed the relics of a famous saint, was the recognized place for the taking of the most binding oaths or for clearing oneself from a serious charge.[1] A few examples of the use of churches as depositories may here be given. When Chilperic forced a number of men from the royal domain about Paris to accompany his daughter Rigunth into Spain (VI. 32, 45), many made their wills, and deposited their effects in the churches, with the request that as soon as they were known to have crossed the frontier they should be regarded as dead men, the wills opened, and the effects disposed of according to their wishes.[2] When in 532 Theuderic invaded Auvergne, some of his men broke open the doors of the church of S. Julian at Brioude, and plundered the effects of the poor which were stored there.[3] At the time of the disturbances connected with Gundovald's adventure, in 585, the church of S. Vincent, in the territory of Agen, was used by the neighbouring people as a storehouse for their more valued possessions, which the soldiers of the Pretender or King Guntram might have looted: 'their hope was that Christian men would not do outrage to the church of so great a martyr', and they carefully barred the doors. The hope was vain. Guntram's forces set fire to the doors, broke into the building, and carried off everything, including the church plate.[4]

---

[1] *G.C.* 71. We may compare the action of King Edwin, who began to enclose a small old timber church, or oratory, at York in a much larger church of stone (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* ii, ch. 14). The work was finished by his successor, Oswald.

[2] Wooden churches suited Teutonic tradition, and were therefore more freely used in regions where the Frankish population was densest (A. Marignan, as above, ii, p. 149). Stone building in general was later in the north-east of Gaul than in the south and centre.

[3] V. 2: *quae super muros civitatis ligneis tabulis fabricata est.* Wooden churches are mentioned at Tours, Reims, Brives, and other places. In G. M. 58 we read of an oratory at Yseure on the Creuse as *consertum ligneis tabulis.* In ch. 47 of the same work another such oratory is mentioned as having been erected on a spot where the remains of S. Saturninus had rested. In ch. 51 we hear of yet another *ligneis constructa tabulis*, at Thiers, Puy-de-Dôme.

[4] Dom. H. Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article, 'France,' Sect. iii and article, 'Gallicane, Église,' col. 391.

[5] *Ibid.* The church served as a 'record office': archives were there preserved. Wills were made in it (see p. 321).

[6] The holding of an episcopal council in the *secretarium* of a large church (V. 12 (18)) was a proceeding to which even less objection could be taken than to the holding of the bishop's court. A less defensible use was to provide quarters for a person taking sanctuary, when that person, like Eberulf, lived without respect for the Church. The difference between the *secretarium* and the *salutatorium*, a chamber where the clergy might be interviewed by laymen, is not very clear. Vestments were kept in both. See Ducange, s.v.

If it contained the tomb of a miracle-working saint, the church often wore the aspect of a modern dispensary or the out-patients' department of a hospital. The scenes in such a church must have rivalled those of which we read in the history of the later Middle Ages. Here is the account of things seen by Agilulf, one of Gregory's deacons, in the cathedral at Lyons, in which was interred S. Patroclus, celebrated during his life and after his death for miraculous cures of the sick.[5] Agilulf was on his way back from Italy, whither he had travelled to collect relics for churches in his own country. Arriving at Lyons, it occurred to him that he might as well add some Gaulish relics to his foreign supply. On entering the church he saw before him crowds of people about the tomb, 'like swarms of happy bees coming together at their familiar honeycomb'.[1] By the tomb stood a priest, who distributed, or at any rate helped the faithful to obtain, dust from the tomb, bits of consecrated wax, or fragments cut from the fringes round the tomb-covering.[2] Agilulf obtained some of the herbs which the devout cast upon the tomb,[3] and with these he went away satisfied. At Tours, Gregory allowed a deaf-mute boy of very high Frankish lineage to sleep in the very church of S. Martin side by side with a deacon and another person connected with the church.[4] The bed of S. Silvester, bishop of Chalon, *funibus subtilibus innexum*, was kept in the presbytery of the church (G. C. 84). People who suffered from fever were laid beneath it and healed; or they recovered by cutting off little bits of the cords, decoctions of which in water they presumably swallowed. Gregory's mother cured a girl by means of this bed. An infant, believed to be dead, was left lying all night in the church before the tomb of Maximus, bishop of Riez; in the morning, as Gregory, years afterwards, heard from his own lips, he was found trying to walk (G. C. 82).

---

[1] Instances in Gregory's works have been noticed (p. 306). The adventurer Andarchius took advantage of this custom to defeat the ends of justice by posting witnesses in the *sacrarium* who could hear a false Ursus make a promise in the name of the true (IV. 32 (46)). Cf. also A. Marignan, as above, ii, p. xxxvii.

[2] VI. 32 (45): *resque suas ecclesiis deputantes.*

[3] III. 12: *Confringunt ostia . . . resque pauperum, quae ibidem fuerant adgregatae diripiunt.*

[4] VII. 35. Gregory claims that the divine vengeance soon fell upon them.

[5] V. P. ix. 6.

It is interesting to find that the healing power was freely granted for the cure of animals, especially those which shared human labour. At many places cattle and other animals were brought to the tomb to be cured of restiveness, and perhaps also of disease.[5] Frequently the beasts were brought into the church, and into the very neighbourhood of the tomb. The scenes thus enacted would have pleased S. Francis; there were doubtless cases which might have been compared with the charming episode of the monks' pet fawn in later Middle Ages, which came into the church with a broken leg and was healed at the altar.[6] But as bodily presence could be dispensed with,

[1] *Vidit immensum catervatim populum ad eius sepulchrum ac velut felicium examina apium ad consuetum alveare confluere.*

[2] *Presbitero qui aderat ministrante. Disruptas ab operturio eius fimbrias.*

[3] *Quaedam de herbulis quas devotio populi iecerit in tumulo.*

[4] VIII. 16: *Iussi eum cum diacono meo et alio ministro in ipsum templum sanctum in lectulo requiescere . . . nocte autem in ipsa, ut diximus, aede dormiebat.*

[5] V. J. 31. Bulls were often brought for treatment.

[6] Guibert, quoted by G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 243.

and the power of S. Martin was transmitted through any object brought from his churches, it sufficed generally to bring them in contact with such objects. Thus horses were cured of a sickness by being branded with a bolt from an oratory dedicated to him, and presumably containing relics (V. S. M. iv. 33).[1] Church keys, applied to the bodies of animals, were held to avert disease.

The sacristan or caretaker of the church was called *mansionarius*. It was his duty to tend the lamps,[2] and open or close the doors, which suggests that he may have held the lowest clerical grade, that of *ostiarius*. An *aedituus* is mentioned as serving the church of S. Martin at Tours (V. S. M. v. 20).

The church building, if it thus served the community for purposes which were not directly religious, was naturally in regular use for the holding of the prescribed services, and in churches attached to monasteries these took place through the night as well as the day (p. 335) The chanting of the various offices was conscientiously performed whatever the distractions or interruptions, which in such a land as Merovingian Gaul might occur at unusual hours. We are not, therefore, to suppose that the churches were in any way withdrawn from their appointed use ; it was simply that at a period when public buildings were rare, the one solid structure spacious enough to contain a large number of people had to serve ends for which, in a more highly differentiated civilization, separate buildings are provided. If the Church was in some ways a loser by these encroachments, she gained in other ways ; the church building was identified with the life of the people upon many sides and not upon one alone.

We may now try to visualize the structure which played so intimate a part in the spiritual and temporal concerns of the Frankish Gallo-Roman population.[3] As the buildings themselves have almost all vanished, we have to rely upon the mention of them in the pages of contemporary writers,[4] and upon comparative evidence derived from church buildings in other countries.

---

[1] Oil from lamps hanging at such tombs was taken out to cure cattle (V. S. M. iii. 18).

[2] Though this was sometimes done by women (p. 328). *Mansionarii* are mentioned in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (Bks. I. 5 ; III. 14, 24, 25).

[3] Cf. C. Enlart, *Manuel d'archéologie française*, vol. i ; the same, in A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, I. i, pp. 110 ff. ; R. de Lasteyrie, ' L'église de Saint-Martin de Tours ', in *Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions*, 1892.

[4] The materials, archaeological and literary, have been collected by A. Marignan, *Études sur la civ. française*, ii, ch. 6, and by Dom Leclercq, as above. The ancient writers most fertile in allusion or description are Gregory himself and Fortunatus.

The larger church of Merovingian times was a gable-roofed and apsed basilica, in which the practice of building galleries on columns over the two aisles, after the early Christian model, was in course of time abandoned.[1] As in the case of Saint-Pierre at Vienne, the two orders of columns one above the other were replaced by the taller single piers of arcades which rose to the level of the aisle roofs ; above the arcades were the high upper walls of the nave pierced with windows ; above these, again, was the flat wooden ceiling, hiding the interior of the timbered gable-roof, the exterior of which was sometimes covered with tin or other metal.[2] If, as sometimes happened, there was a transept between the nave and the apse, the square bay at the crossing might be covered by a tall wooden lantern or ' tower ' (*turritus*, *apex*, *arx*),[3] surmounted by a small spire ; this feature is regarded as a barbaric contribution to the basilican type. There was no long choir, the church terminating in an apse with windows. Where a crypt is mentioned, it must be compared to the *confessio* of the Roman churches, an arched chamber below the high altar, which may have stood raised on a substructure approached by steps. This crypt often contained the titular saint's tomb. There was a porch or narthex at the 'west end', before which was an *atrium*, sometimes surrounded by arcades, above or behind which rose various structures, residences for clergy and others, and monastic buildings.[4] People were constantly passing through it on their way in or out of the church ; persons in sanctuary [5] took the air there, for it was regarded as inviolable (p. 311, n. 2). Afflicted and deformed persons asked alms at the doors, patients awaited their cure.[1] At the monastery church in Auvergne, built by S. Abraham, large vessels of wine were placed ready in the *atrium* for the refreshment of the people on days of festival (V. P. iii). A basilica dedicated to S. Martin in Galicia was approached through a pergola of vines before the *porticus*.[2]

---

[1] Probably because carelessly laid foundations and bad wall-construction forced the columns from the perpendicular, and endangered the building.

[2] Bishop Eufronius covered the roof of S. Martin's with tin, King Lothar contributing to the cost (X. 31) ; tin was also used on the church of S. Vincent at Paris. Cf. further, Marignan, as above, pp. 177–8.

[3] This wooden construction afforded an easy solution for the roofing of the central bay. The *turritus* is mentioned by Fortunatus in relation to the church built by Bishop Felix of Nantes (Fort., *Carm.* iii. 5).

[4] The monastery founded by Ingitrude is described as being ' in the atrium ' of S. Martin.

[5] Houses upon the atrium seem to have been available for persons seeking sanctuary in the churches dedicated to popular saints. At S. Martin's at Tours, Prince Merovech plainly had commodious quarters, and Eberulf had a lodging (*metatus*), where he kept good store of wine (VII. 26 (29)).

Although the simple basilica of Roman or Ravennate type may have predominated, it is possible that plans adopted in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor may also have been adopted. The basilica of S. Martin is thought to have been the model for the great pilgrim churches of later date in the south of France and in Galicia. M. Émile Mâle has shown that S. Sernin of Toulouse bears a remarkable resemblance in plan to the great basilica of S. Menas, uncovered in recent years in Egypt.[3] It is a plausible inference that the design of the far-famed pilgrims' church in Egypt was copied in the greatest pilgrims' church in Gaul, which was in turn reproduced in the basilicas of S. James of Compostella and S. Sernin of Toulouse.

The Merovingian church having no long choir, the altar stood before the apse, and if there were transepts, at the crossing, beneath the ' tower '. Under the altar was buried the titular saint or other saint, if the church was fortunate enough to possess such remains.[4] The place of interment might, in large churches, be a regular crypt ; in other cases it was a smaller chamber. Crypts were evidently vaulted. One dedicated to S. Chrysanthus the martyr, standing at the time of Numerian, is described as *miro opere fabricata, quae in arcorum modo transvoluta firmissima stabilitate substitit.*[5] At Dijon, the crypt in which S. Benignus was buried was *ab antiquis transvoluta.*[6] But vaulting was still being done in the early sixth century, for Gregory's ancestor, the bishop of Langres, rebuilt this crypt, 'vaulting it in an elegant style' (G. M. 50). The baptistery was a detached building adjoining the church.[1]

---

[1] A gouty patient stayed five days before S. Martin's tomb ; a paralytic was brought in a cart (*carruca devectus*) (V. M. ii. 4, 6).

[2] *Ibid.* iv. 7 : *vitium camera extensa per traduces dependentibus uvis.*

[3] *L'art religieux du XII siècle en France* (1922), pp. 299, 300. For the basilica of S. Menas see the books on his exploration by C. M. Kaufmann, *Die Menasstadt*, Leipzig, 1910, and *Die heilige Stadt der Wüste*, 1918. For S. Martin's at Tours see the references in Dalton, *Letters of Sidonius*, ii. 232.

[4] Relics were enclosed in a hollowed stone, or in a silver relic-box (*capsa*). For the Merovingian altar see A. Marignan, as above, ii, p. 169.

[5] G. M. 37. In the History (VIII. 34) we read of a boy-recluse at Bordeaux who was walled up in a cell in the corner of a crypt ' finely vaulted by them of old time ' (*cripta ab antiquis transvolutum, eleganteque opere exposita*). For the crypts at Jouarre and Grenoble see Marignan, pp. 172–3.

[6] *Ibid.* 50.

Sometimes a building or part of a building used for secular purposes was converted to religious use. Thus on becoming bishop of Tours, Gregory transformed a storeroom (*promptuarium*) into an oratory. To this he brought in procession with gleam of crosses and tapers (*radiantibus cereis crucibusque*) relics of SS. Martin, Saturninus, Julian, and Illidius, four great saints of Gaul. The relics were carried in wooden coffers (*nafis, noffis*),[2] or wrapped in textiles.

In a few cases the dimensions of churches are given. The basilica of S. Martin at Tours is stated by Gregory to have been 160 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 45 feet high as far as the ceiling. The building had in all 120 columns, 52 windows, and 8 doors.[3] Bishop Namatius of Clermont built in that city the church standing in Gregory's time. It was a cruciform basilica, 150 feet long, 60 feet wide in the nave, and 50 feet high from floor to ceiling (*usque cameram*). It had a round apse, and two aisles (*ascellas*) ; its windows numbered 42, its columns 70 ; it had 8 doors ; the walls of the sanctuary were lined with marble of different kinds.[4] In general the proportions and the main features show that this church was not very different in size from that of S. Martin. It is a point of interest that Gregory gives the number of columns in the basilica of S. Peter at Rome : four rows of fine columns numbering ninety-six in all, and therefore fewer than those in S. Martin's.[5]

The interior of the Merovingian church was brilliant both by day and by night. The walls were covered with paintings, and there were also marble linings and coloured hangings. The frescoes in the church of S. Martin at Tours were celebrated.[6] In II. 17 we read of the actual process of decorating a church in Clermont, the wife of Bishop Namatius sitting with a book on her knees directing the painters.[1] Mural mosaics may have been sparingly employed, though tessellated decoration was more often used for pavements; there were, however, good examples of Christian mural mosaic in Gaul which might easily have incited to imitation, those for instance which survived the Renaissance in the church at Toulouse to which men gave its popular name La Daurade,[2] and those in a church at Cologne known to the local people as 'The Golden Saints'.[3] The mosaics placed by Agricola, bishop of Châlons, in a church in that place, which was also enriched with lining of various marbles,[4] may have covered the upper walls, though this cannot be definitely asserted. One pavement-mosaic assigned to Merovingian times survives at Thiers, the subject being a lion.[5] Where a church was not paved with mosaic, the floor was sometimes laid with very hard cement composed of lime and pulverized tiles or bricks, as in the case of a church at Aire.[6]

---

[1] They were either round, or, like that of S. John at Poitiers (p. 318, n. 1), rectangular. Cf. A. Marignan, ii, p. 178.

[2] G. C. 20. In the Salic law (*tit.* 14 ; ed. Behrend, p. 20) we read : *Si quis mortuum hominem aut in noffo aut in petra super alium miserit*, &c., where *noffum* clearly means a wooden coffin.

[3] II. 14 ; and cf. Sidonius, *Letters*, Bk. IV. 18.

[4] II. *16* : *totumque aedificium in modum crucis habetur expositum. . . . Parietes ad altarium opere sarsurio ex multa marmorum genera exornatos habet.*

[5] V. S. M. 27. Gregory uses the word Vatican, saying : *templum quod vocitabatur antiquitus Batecanum.* Rufinus, ii. 25, gives the usual initial letter.

[6] I this church there were painted scenes from the life of the saint ; they

The effect of the interior was heightened not alone by mural paintings or mosaics and marble linings, but by the frequent use of columns of coloured marble, almost certainly antique. The church of S. Martin at Brives-la-Gaillarde, burned in 584, had columns of divers kinds of marble,[7] probably taken from

---

are described at some length by Fortunatus (*Carm.* x. 6). When Duke Eberulf was in sanctuary there, his servants found distraction by going into the church, after the hour of closing, and looking at the pictured walls (VII. 22). For other references to Merovingian frescoes cf. Marignan, as above, p. 158.

[1] This may have been some sort of painter's manual like those used in the East; or a Life of the Saints, or an illuminated manuscript. We know that church decoration reproduced that of manuscripts, e. g. that of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome.

[2] P. Clemen, *Die romanische Monumentalmalerei in den Rheinlanden* (1916), pp. 183 ff. The church built by Bishop Patiens at Lyons and described by Sidonius (*Letters*, Bk. II, 10) may have provided another example.

[3] G. M. 61: *quia admirabili opere ex musivo . . . deaurata resplendet, Sanctos Aureos, ipsam basilicam incolae vociferare voluerunt.*

[4] V. 45: *ecclesiam fabricavit quam columnis fulcivit, variavit marmore, mosevo depinxit.* If the various marble and the mosaic decorated the walls, this would be only the usual arrangement in early Christian and Byzantine churches, the marble lining the lower walls, the mosaic the higher spaces.

[5] It is oriental in style. For mosaics in S. Geneviève at Paris see R. de Lasteyrie, *L'arch. relig. en France*, p. 218, and for those of S. Germain-des-Prés, Bouquet, *Recueil des hist.* iii, p. 437. A mosaic of Carolingian date survives at Germigny-des-Prés, near Orleans (A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, I, pt. i, fig. 163 on p. 325); P. Clemen, *Die romanische Monumentalmalerei in den Rheinlanden*, 1916, pp. 183 ff.

[6] G. C. 51: *Calce et comminuto testo quasi silex durissima fusum erat.*

[7] VII. 10: *ita ut tam altarium quam columnae que de diversis marmorum generibus aptatae erant, ab igne dissolverentur.*

more ancient buildings. Lintels, tympana, and capitals may have been sculptured with formal ornament of an orientalizing style,[1] though many capitals were antique. However rude the sculpture, the contrast of the white marble or other stone with the brightly coloured walls and ceiling must have heightened the effect of richness. The windows were filled with glass fixed in wooden frames; though the windows themselves were large, the panes were probably quite small, and may have been sometimes coloured.[2]

The church, in Merovingian as in early Christian times, was brightly lit by a large number of lamps, some hanging from the roof;[3] lamps also hung before the tombs of saints.[4] So great a number of oil-fed lamps required much care for their replenishment and the proper tending of the wicks; this seems to have been often the work of women.[5] Suspended lamps were hung on cords running over pulleys, so that they could be drawn up or down by the person attending to them. In G. M. 103 there is mention of hooks (*uncinuli*) on the lamp-cord. Lamps were the frequent vehicles of signs and wonders, chiefly when they were said to burn on indefinitely without any replenishment of the oil, or when they increased their original supply until it overflowed; the power to do this was derived from the saintly relics near which they hung. This power is recorded of the lamp before the *arca* of relics in the monastery of Poitiers (X. 15), and in that in an oratory in the atrium of S. Martin's basilica at Tours.[6] The oil from lamps hanging in such positions, when applied to the person, was regarded as a sovereign remedy. Fortunatus and his fellow-student, Felix, when attending the schools of Ravenna, were troubled with an affection of the eyes; this was cured by rubbing with oil from a lamp burning before a picture of S. Martin in his church in that city.[1] In addition to oil-lamps there were numerous candles or tapers. The custom of offering votive candles was general in sixth-century Gaul; we find many instances in Gregory. A woman offers a candle as tall as herself (G. M. 15), in like manner a paralytic holds one of his own height.[2] Tapers or candles of large size are frequently mentioned as carried in processions, which go their way *cum crucibus et cereis*. Beeswax was used in the manufacture of candles: a man of Auch vowed to S. Martin the wax of his hives to be used *ad luminaria basilicae* (V. S. M. v. 15).

---

[1] We may recall the ornament on the sarcophagi in the Museum at Toulouse, executed in the time of Visigothic dominion (E. Le Blant, *Sarcophages chrét. de la Gaule*, pl. IV, XXVIII, XXXIII).

[2] The church at Yseure had *fenestras ex more quae vitro lignis incluso cluduntur* (G. M. 58). Fortunatus says of the windows in the cathedral church of Tours, restored by Gregory:

Nunc placet aula decens patulis oculata fenestris (*Carm.* x. 6);

and of the church of the Holy Cross (afterwards S. Germain-des-Prés) at Paris, built by Childebert I:

Prima capit radios vitreis oculata fenestris (*ibid.* ii. 14).

[3] Leo, bishop of Agde, breaks with a rod *lychnos qui de camera ecclesiae dependebant* (G. M. 77).

[4] Numbers of small lamps, perhaps in the form of inverted cones of glass in which wicks floated, must have been fitted in metal *coronae* or *polycandela* for the general lighting of the church; for the individual lamp was small and gave but a feeble light. Wicks are in some cases described as being made of papyrus.

[5] G. M. 14 and 33.

[6] This lamp was miraculous in another way; it sent down fire to light the candle of its tender, who was unable to reach the flame (G. M. 14). This was one of the lamps hoisted by a cord and pulley.

The church bells (*signa*), though themselves outside, were rung by ropes hanging within. Perhaps the bells, the ringing of which is so often mentioned by Gregory,[3] usually hung in the central turret. In one case we read of a bell-rope hanging down in the church [4] not far from the altar, of which it shared the sanctity; several cases are reported by Gregory in which scrapings or cuttings from the bell-rope were used, like the dust from the tomb, to form a medicinal potion producing miraculous cures.[5]

Tombs. Burial within churches was frequent. We occasionally find it difficult to reconcile a description in Gregory with the assumed central position for the tomb of the principal saint. In the case of Tours we read of a priest going to the basilica of S. Martin at night to obtain some of the celebrated tomb-dust

---

[1] V. M. i. 15. Here there may have been relics, or the power may have been regarded as residing even in the picture. It may be noted that the church of S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna was also once dedicated to S. Martin, and that saint leads the procession of male saints advancing towards Our Lord in the mosaics on the right-hand side of the nave.

[2] *Ibid.* 18. This determination of the size by the height of the giver was evidently of frequent occurrence.

[3] *Commovere signum*, II. 23; III. 15; VI. 17 (25); *cum die dominica . . . ad matutinus signum commotum fuisset*, G. M. 75; *commoto signo*, V. P. vii. 2; *moto matutinis signo*, V. S. M. ii. 11; *signum quod matutinis commoveri solet*, *ibid.* 45.

[4] V. J. 27. Lightning enters the church at Brioude: *per aditum quo funis ille signi dependit.*

[5] V. M. 28: a man cuts a few particles from the bell-rope (*funis de quo signum commovetur*) and effects cures.

(p. 256) wherewith to cure a young servant. He cannot wake the *aedituus*, and is unable to enter the building; he therefore goes round outside 'to the apse of the tomb',[1] offers prayer, and obtains some external dust, which suffices. A theft attempted at this tomb shows that the thieves entered from outside, broke the glazed windows of the apse, and stood upon the tomb within.[2] A description of the tomb of S. Gregory of Langres is rather obscure, but seems to suggest that a reinterment took place near the altar, involving the erection of an apse of remarkably fine workmanship.[3] The crypt was a regular place of interment. At the east end of the church of S. Venerandus at Clermont was a vaulted chamber (*transvoluta cellula*) in which were sarcophagi of Parian marble, presumably of Roman date.[4] Part of the vault, becoming ruinous, fell upon one of these, in which was found the undecomposed body of a girl wearing jewellery.[5] The tomb next to this was inscribed *sanctae memoriae Galliae.*[6] Gregory mentions various sarcophagi in churches. One was at Dijon (G. C. 41). Another, placed across the corner of an oratory, could not be moved into a better position, though the bishop set to the work three hundred men with ropes and crowbars (G. C. 59). The tomb of S. Venerandus had a superstructure (*analogium*) with a kind of window. The petitioner seeking the help of the saint put his head through this window before delivering himself of his prayer.[7] At Rennes, the tomb of

---

[1] *Coram apsida sepulchri*: V. M. v. 20.

[2] *Effracta vitrea sunt ingressi* (VI. 10). They got away with 'much gold and silver', and with rich silk coverings.

[3] Tetricus, son and successor of S. Gregory of Langres, moved his father's body from the corner of the church, where it had first been laid, to a position over against the altar as above described: *ante altare basilicae fundamenta iacit, erectaque absida, miro opere construit et transvolvit. Qua transvoluta, disruptoque pariete, arcum aedificat. Quod opus perfectum atque exornatum, in medio absidae loculum fodit.* The tomb of S. Médard at Soissons was placed in, or just before, the apse (G. C. 94).

[4] G. C. 34. S. Benignus was buried at Dijon in an ancient Roman sarcophagus (G. M. 50). For sarcophagi cf. A. Marignan, as above, ii, pp. 153, 160, 169.

[5] She was regarded as a saint, and a count's wife was cured of blindness at her tomb.

[6] In another part of the church was a tomb upon which no man might sit with impunity. A beggar who so sat was noisily projected afar (*cum sonitu magno excussus et longe proiectus*) by the power of the dead reposing within.

[7] *Sub analogio compositum, super quod caput per fenestellum quique vult immittit, precans quae necessitas cogit*, G. C. 36. In England, the tomb of S. Chad was a wooden *aediculum* with a hole in the side through which people

Melanius was also surmounted by some sort of wooden canopy.[1] The tomb of S. Julian at Brioude was surmounted by a pyramidal canopy.[2] All such tombs were covered by *pallia* and surrounded by marble slabs, or railings if the concourse of pilgrims was great. Near some of them were suspended votive offerings, such as the broken fetters of prisoners freed by their power. Sometimes even a saint's remains were placed in a coffin or cist of wood;[3] we are thus reminded of the case of S. Cuthbert, the planks of whose wooden coffin are still to be seen in the Library of Durham Cathedral.

But the number of persons buried inside the churches must have been relatively small. Most people were laid to rest outside. Some were placed in sarcophagi quite close to the building. A sarcophagus standing before the atrium of S. Hilary's church at Poitiers was so rubbed in one place by persons seeking to use the powdered marble as a remedy for toothache that a hole was worn through.[4] An empty sarcophagus being found, with an inscription proving it once to have been occupied by Crescentia, *sacrata Deo puella*, an oratory was built over it.[5] There were often graveyards round the churches. In the passage quoted above describing the breaking into the church of S. Martin through the apse, the thieves are said to have used the *cancellum* of a tomb as a ladder wherewith to reach the window.[6] There were tombs, apparently in the open, between the basilicas of S. Venerandus and S. Illidius at Clermont (G. C. 35). At Autun there was an open graveyard

put in their hands to get the dust, regarded there also as a valuable medicine when steeped in water (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 3).

[1] *Miram fabricam celsitudine* (G. C. 54). This tomb was miraculously unharmed by fire when certain hangings above it fell in flames.

[2] V. S. J. ch. 20. Such a canopy might be surmounted by a cross, or by a dove (cf. G. M. 72, and Ruinart, *Praefatio*, § 53).

[3] Wood is mentioned before stone in the Salic law, *tit.* 14, mentioned on p. 326, n. 2: *aut in noffo aut in petra*, &c. Avitus, bishop of Clermont, on enlarging the crypt where S. Illidius was interred, found his bones *in capsa tabulis formata ligneis*. He at once caused them to be placed, *iuxta morem*, in a sarcophagus (V. P. ii. 4). S. Radegund was also buried in a wooden coffin (G. C. 104).

[4] G. C. 52: *ita . . . ut iam in uno loco sarcofagum appareat transforatum.*

[5] *Ibid.* 103. Cf. Le Blant, *Inscr. chrétiennes de la Gaule*, No. 203.

[6] VI. 10: *Ponentes ad fenestram absidae cancellum quod super tumulum cuiusdam defuncti erat, ascendentes per eum, effracta vitrea sunt ingressi.*

Burial round the church was early practised by the Franks, and is confirmed by modern excavation. In the Rhineland there seems to have been little to distinguish the Christian from the pagan dead for a long time after the introduction of Christianity (K. Schumacher, *Siedelungs- und Kulturgeschichte der Rheinlande*, iii (1925), pp. 217 ff.).

adjoining the basilica of S. Stephen. Here was the tomb of Cassian, often seen by Gregory, the stone of which was always being scraped by the sick that they might drink the powder as a medicine.[1] Ursinus, first bishop of Bourges, was buried in an unmarked grave: *in campo, inter reliqua sepulchra populorum.* At a later time, vineyards were planted on this ground.[2] When Agustus, abbot of S. Symphorian, was entertaining Germanus of Paris at his monastery without the walls of Bourges, Ursinus appeared in a vision to the guest, and revealed the spot where his grave was to be found. The abbot and the bishop went out to the vineyard at night, preceded by a cleric carrying a light, and made the discovery of the saint's sarcophagus. The cemetery here mentioned may have originally adjoined an oratory or a church. But in the following example we seem to find a survival of the Roman custom of burial by the roadside. Bishop Aravatius, who died in the middle of the fifth century, was buried in a tomb near a bridge over which the highway passed.[3] Epitaphs were carved upon tombs.[4]

The bodies of royal persons, bishops, and probably other people of distinction were embalmed. The body of S. Radegund was so treated,[5] and there are other instances. The body of Pelagia, mother of S. Aredius (Yrieix), seems to have lain in state.[6]

Suicides were buried apart and without the usual rites. Thus Palladius, count of Javols, who had accused Bishop Parthenius before Sigibert, and was removed from his office, heard a rumour that the king intended his execution. He went into his bedroom, and placing his feet on the hilts of his sword, drove the point through his body. He was buried in unconsecrated ground without any mass being said.[7]

---

[1] G. C. 73. In this cemetery two men heard a wondrous chanting proceed from the tombs. Then the spirits of the dead themselves arose, taking visible form, and entered the church, still singing. As the two men did not take their departure, they were denounced by the spirits for intruding upon the mysteries of their devotion. One man fled; the other shortly afterwards died.

[2] G. C. 79.

[3] G. C. 71: *iuxta ipsum pontem aggeris publici.* This tomb had the power of melting all snow that fell upon it.

[4] Cf. E. Le Blant, *Incriptions chrét. de la Gaule*, and *Nouveau recueil*, 1892; F. X. Kraus, *Die altchristlichen Inschriften der Rheinlande*, 1890–4.

[5] *Corpus aromatibus conditum*: G. C. 104.

[6] *Ibid.* 102.

[7] IV. 26 (39): *Sepulturae mandatus, sed non iuxta Christianorum cadavera positus, sed missarum solemnia non meruit. . . .*

b. Church Furniture, Services and Choir.

We learn little that is precise on this subject. Some details are given as to the altar, its candlesticks or crosses; *ciboria* of both kinds (canopies and receptacles for the Host) are mentioned.[1] Nothing is said as to the form of censers or of incense-vessels. The ambo is not described in the History, though elsewhere mentioned (G. M. i. 93). The *lavacrum* is mentioned; it was probably a basin of much greater diameter than the medieval font, and stood in the centre of the baptistery. Seats or benches, perhaps stalls, stood in the choir. Bishop Praetextatus, just before his murder in church at Rouen, was resting upon one.[2]

Of church plate we hear more (cf. p. 430). It was sometimes of gold enriched with gems. When Childebert I marched into Septimania to avenge his sister's wrongs on her Visigothic husband Amalaric, he brought back a quantity of such plate (III. 10). When threatened with attack by Guntram's forces because the people of Poitiers resisted that king's claim to their allegiance, Maroveus, bishop of the diocese, broke up a chalice and turning it into money redeemed himself and the people; [3] this must clearly have been a vessel of great intrinsic value.

Processional crosses were numerous, and many were doubtless gemmed and covered with silver or gold, but Gregory only tells us that they were carried on this or that occasion. For instance, he says that when the pall from the tomb of S. Remi was carried in procession at times of danger or necessity, it was accompanied by crosses, tapers, and candelabra (G. C. 78). This association of (processional) crosses and tapers was general. It was with such accompaniment that the relic of the True Cross sent to Radegund by the emperor and empress of East Rome made its entry into her monastery at Poitiers.[4]

Not much is said in the History as to the precise nature of vestments,[5] though in Gregory's other writings there is definite mention of the chasuble. They were kept in the vestry (*sacrarium*).[1] Priests and bishops may have been buried in their vestments.[2] White vestments were worn at Easter; the chasuble worn by the bishop was white.[3] The chasuble, as such, was known in Gaul in the sixth and seventh centuries, and is mentioned by Gregory in an interesting passage relating to the scandalous conduct of Priscus, successor of S. Nicetius, bishop of Trèves (V. P. viii. 5).[4]

---

[1] Cf. A. Marignan, as above, ii, pp. 170 ff.

[2] The word used is *formula*. The same word may perhaps signify a low stool: when Germanus prayed before the tomb of the blessed Lusor, he used a *formula in qua cum necessitas cogeret genua deflectebat* (G. C. 90; cf. V. P. xix. 2).

[3] VII. 24: *Ille vero cum se ab his cerneret coartatum, effracto unum de sacris ministeriis calicem, et in numisma redactum, se populumque redimit.*

[4] Fortunatus, *Carm.* ii. 1–7.

[5] Some details as to vestments in Merovingian times are obtained from the second of the two letters formerly attributed to S. Germain of Paris, but

The bishop wore the *pallium*, which encircled his neck, one end hanging down over his breast; in form it corresponded almost exactly with the ὠμοφόριον of the Greek Church.[5] At mass he also wore *manualia, manicae*, or sleeves for the forearm, and perhaps, in part, the hands.[6]

Priests wore both chasubles and *manualia*. The deacon wore the long white tunic of silk or wool known as the alb.[7]

---

apparently not earlier than the close of the seventh century. See Dom A. Wilmart in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, in the article cited below (p. 335) entitled 'Germain de Paris (Lettres attribuées à Saint)', cols. 1093–4. For vestments in general see J. Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, 1907; P. Batiffol, *Études de liturgie et d'archéologie* (1919), pp. 30–83. As is well known, vestments developed from the Roman civil costume of the fourth century, some, e. g. *maniple*, *stole*, and *pallium* being finally conventionalized into insignia in appearance remote from their original forms. In the sixth century the development from the garment to the liturgical vestment must already have proceeded far.

[1] When the mob pursued Parthenius the hated minister of Theudebert after the death of that king, the hunted man took refuge in a church at Trèves, where the clergy concealed him in a chest: *ponentes eum in arca et desuper sternentes vestimenta quae erant ad usum ecclesiae* (III. 36). These *vestimenta* may have been either hangings or vestments.

[2] In IV. 37 Gregory says of S. Friardus: *quem episcopus abluens, atque dignis vestimentis involvens sepulturae mandavit.*

[3] It was often called *amphibalus*. Cf. Life of S. Caesarius, i. 32 (Migne, *Patr. Lat.* lxvii, col. 1017 *a*), and Will of S. Remi, where the saint leaves to his successor *amphibalum album paschalem* (Migne, lxv, col. 971 *b*). The chasuble of S. Nicetius (see n. 4 below): *dilatata atque consuta ut solent in illis candidis fieri quae per paschalia festa sacerdotum humeris imponuntur.*

[4] Priscus, who had hated the saint, presented his *casubla* and *cappa* to a deacon, who made himself garments out of them, using the hood or *cucullus* to make slippers. The passage shows that the chasuble had a *cucullus*, for the deacon says: *hanc casublam tergo utor et de cappa eius, parte prolixiore decisa, tegumen pedum aptabo.* For this outrage we are told that a devil seized the deacon and forced his feet, slippers and all, into the fire, where both were burned. Gregory concludes with the words: *Hactenus de ultionibus!*

[5] See L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien* (ed. 1920), pp. 370–5; P. Batiffol, *Études de liturgie et d'arch.*, pp. 57–71. For the *Omophorion*, cf. F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern*, p. 592 *b* (6).

[6] A Wilmart, as below (p. 335), col. 1094. They corresponded to the ἐπιμανίκια of the Greeks (Brightman, as above, p. 591).

[7] In G. C. 61 Gregory alludes to the group: *albentium diaconorum* at the

A stole, added to this, seems to have been characteristic of Gaul.[1]

Of the bishop's pastoral staff we learn nothing definite, a *virga* of Gregory of Langres is mentioned in V. P. vii. 2; this may have been like those of the early Irish saints, as much like a stick for support as an emblem of authority.

Services and Choir. Services took place in the churches of Gaul at regular hours. Apart from the mass (for which see below, p. 336), they consisted of psalms, antiphons, responses and prayers. The precise order and form of these varied widely,[2] bishops being able to determine the practice of their own dioceses; there was no uniformity until the Carolingian period, and monastic practice largely inspired the adopted use.[3] The lack of uniformity was caused by the absence of any real centre for ecclesiastical authority in Gaul corresponding to that at Toledo in Spain. For offices in monastic churches see p. 372.

The Gallican liturgy in the Merovingian age was probably derived from that of Milan, used in the north of Italy, in Visigothic Spain, in Britain, and in Ireland. It was of oriental derivation, perhaps introduced by Bishop Auxentius of Milan (355–74), a Cappadocian by birth,[4] and by virtue of a common origin was closely related to the Mozarabic (Visigothic) and Celtic liturgies. After the decline of Milan in the early fifth century the popes did not impose the liturgy of Rome; hence

---

funeral of S. Nicetius. In the same work, ch. 20, he speaks of *sacerdotum ac levitarum in albis vestibus non minimum chorum.*

[1] Batiffol, as above, p. 239.

[2] Little material exists in the early MSS. which have been published. Cf. A. Wilmart in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Germain de Paris (Lettres attribuées à Saint)', col. 1090. We have to depend on references in ninth-century authorities, who preserve old tradition. Such is Amalaire, in his youth a pupil of Alcuin, who devoted much study to the Antiphonary. Fortunatus (*Carm.* ii. 9: *Ad clerum Parisiacum*) describes the entry of S. Germanus, priests, and deacons into the cathedral church of Paris, and a nocturnal office. A congregation is mentioned.

[3] L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte Chrétien*, ch. iii: 'L'usage romain et l'usage gallican.' The final movement towards the Roman use was inaugurated by Boniface, though some Roman usages had crept in before his time. The Roman mass was introduced and the Gallican suppressed by Pepin the Short, Charlemagne making certain modifications and incorporating some of the old Gallican features (A. Lesort, *L'introduction de la messe romaine en France sous les Carolingiens*, Paris, 1910).

[4] The alternative theory is that it was Ephesian, and was introduced into Lyons at a very early date; this is contested by Duchesne (as above, p. 84). Ruinart, in the Preface to his *Sancti Gregorii Opera* brings together various passages from Gregory's works in favour of a very early origin, noting especially that relating to S. Ursinus (H. F. i. 31).

the survival of the uses of Milan and its offshoots in the transalpine countries.

The Gallican mass of Merovingian times has been reconstructed, largely from passages in Gregory's works,[1] and from two letters doubtfully attributed to S. Germain of Paris, discovered in the monastery of S. Martin at Autun by the Benedictine, Martène, about 1709;[2] these contain an *expositio* of the Gallican liturgy. The comparative study of Visigothic (Mozarabic), Irish, and Gallican mass-books has enabled liturgists to confirm and supplement the order of the service.[3] The main outlines of this order are as follows.

The mass begins with the entry of the celebrant, while an antiphon is sung by the choir. The deacon proclaims silence, and the bishop blesses the congregation.

Three canticles are sung: the *Aios* (*trisagion*),[4] the *Kyrie Eleison* sung by three choir-boys (*tres parvuli*), and the *Benedictus* (Luke i. 68–79), called by Gregory the *Prophetia*, sung by the bishop (VII. 8). The bishop recites the *Collectio post prophetiam*, a collect appropriate to the day.

Next are read two Lessons; the first, *Lectio prophetica*, from the Old Testament (IV. 16; V. S. M. i. 5); the second, from the Epistles.[1] At Easter, passages from the Apocalypse were admitted; on saints' days, their *acta* were recited (G. M. 86; V. S. M. ii. 29, 49).

---

[1] Reconstruction from the scattered allusions in Gregory's works was attempted in the seventeenth century by Mabillon, *De liturgia gallicana*, Paris, 1685, and by Ruinart in an Appendix to his edition of Gregory, cols. 1357–64. The loss of the treatise *De Missis*, of Sidonius Apollinaris, edited, with a preface by Gregory, is much to be deplored.

[2] Reconstruction with the help of these new documents began not long after their discovery, in works by Lebrun, *Explication litt., hist. et dogm. des prières et cérémonies de la Messe* (1726), ii, pp. 241 ff., and by Martène himself in his *De antiquis ecclesiae ritibus*. Later reconstructions are given by Duchesne, as above, ch. vii, by P. Batiffol, *Études de liturgie*, pp. 252 ff.; and Dom A. Wilmart in the learned article in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, cited in note 2 on the previous page, cols. 1066 ff., as well as by Probst, Lejay, Netzer, and others. Dom Wilmart does not believe that the letters attributed to S. Germain were really written by him; in this he agrees with Edm. Bishop, *Liturgica historica*, Oxford, 1918, and disagrees with Duchesne. His conclusion (col. 1102) is that the letter describing the order of the mass is not earlier than the close of the seventh century, and, therefore, almost falling within the Carolingian period. Visigothic influence is apparent, with some influence from Constantinople.

[3] e. g. the Bobbio Missal (see Wilmart, in Cabrol's *Dict.* s.v. *Bobbio*), the Lectionary of Luxeuil, the Stowe Missal (ed. G. F. Warner), the Antiphonary of Bangor (ed. F. E. Warren). Cf. also F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*. For early Gallican sacramentaries, see H. M. Bannister, vols. lii and liii of the Henry Bradshaw Society, London, 1917; and for the Gallican liturgy generally, M. Neale and G. H. Forbes, *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church*, 1855–67.

[4] The Trisagion was probably introduced from Constantinople. Cf. E. Bishop, *Liturgica historica*, p. 131.

Then follows the *Benedictio*, or Hymn of the Three Children (cf. V. P. 6, 7), so called from the frequent occurrence in it of the word *benedicite*.

Then the *Psalmus responsorius* or *Responsorium*, usually sung by the choir-boys, but at Orleans, during Guntram's stay (VIII. 3), by the deacon, as was the case at Rome before Gregory the Great. The deacon, escorted by bearers of seven lighted candles, is next processionally conducted to the ambo (*analogium*) for the reading of the Gospel,[2] the *Aios* being again chanted.

The Gospel over, the congregation recites the acclamation: *Gloria tibi Domine*.[3] The procession returns, once more accompanied by the *Aios*.

The Homily or sermon follows, succeeded by a prayer for the people.

The formula for dismissal of the catechumens and penitents, or excommunicated persons, is now pronounced.[4] Silence is again enjoined by the deacon.[5]

The *Processio Oblationis* now takes place, accompanied by a chant.[6] The bread is carried in a *turris*;[7] the wine in a chalice; when all has been placed on the altar water is mixed with the wine, and the bread, removed from the *turris*, is disposed upon the paten.

---

[1] In the Roman use the lesson from the Old Testament had almost disappeared, from the fifth century onward (Wilmart, as above, col. 1069).

[2] The seven candles symbolized the seven gifts of the Spirit.

[3] Gregory gives the acclamation as: *Gloria Deo omnipotenti* (VIII. 4).

[4] In the sixth century it was an empty form of words as regards catechumens, who were no longer present; for the penitents it still had force. Persons who had been excommunicated, or *communione privati*, were numerous enough. Cf. Council of Orleans, A. D. 549, Can. 2. Cf. also V. P. xvii. 2, where Nicetius, bishop of Trèves, insists on the withdrawal of certain persons in the suite of King Theudebert. In X. 8 Eulalius, by exception, is allowed to remain.

[5] Cf. VIII. 4; it may have been at this point that King Guntram made his appeal to the people of Paris (VII. 8).

[6] The offerings of the faithful were made previously. In the procession only the oblates were carried. Their preparation in the *sacrarium* was probably accompanied by special prayers.

[7] Cf. G. M. 86; X. 31, where Leo, bishop of Tours, is said to have made *turres* of wood enriched with gilding.

The oblation, set upon a corporal of pure linen, is finally covered by a rich veil of silk, sometimes sown with gems.[1] A triple *Alleluia* is sung by the choir.[2]

The names of the departed are recited from the diptychs,[3] at the same time the covering veil is removed.

The Kiss of Peace follows (VI. 40).

Then comes the Eucharistic prayer (*Contestatio*) (V. S. M. ii. 14), the Gallican term being *Immolatio*, succeeded by the *Sanctus* and a collect.

After a prayer, follows the Consecration;[4] the celebrant breaks the bread, while the choir sings a Psalm with antiphon, called the *Confractorium*.[5]

A particle of the bread is steeped in the wine (*Commixtio*).

The Lord's Prayer is then recited (V. P. xvi),[6] and the bishop now blesses the people (*Benedictio*).

The communion follows, the congregation entering the choir and coming up to the altar.[7] While they communicate, the choir sings the *Trecanum*, a form of doxology. The thanksgiving prayer (*Post communionem*) succeeds, then a collect. The rite ends with the words of dismissal: *Missa acta est.*[1]

---

[1] Cf. V. S. M. ii. 25; V. P. viii. 11. Similar rich fabrics were placed upon the tombs of saints (VII. 22; G. M. 72). The custom of covering the oblates in this way may have been of Greek introduction.

[2] In the Mozarabic liturgy a chant, the *Sacrificium*, was sung at this point. Duchesne supposes that the Prayer of the Veil, used in that liturgy, may also have been recited. He places here the exclusion of excommunicated persons which, in the sequence given above, followed the order to the catechumens.

[3] Fortunatus alludes to the (ivory) diptychs (*Carm.* x. 7):

Nomina vestra legat patriarchis atque prophetis
Cui hodie in templo diptychus edit ebur.

For the recitation from the diptychs see E. Bishop, *Observations on the Liturgy of Narsai*, pp. 97 ff., and *Liturgica historica*, pp. 100–2. Wilmart (cols. 1083–4) notes the fact that the names of the living were also recited in Gaul, if we may judge from Gallican and Mozarabic books, remarking that nevertheless this is not mentioned by Gregory. For the diptychs see also H. Omont, *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxii, pp. 152–5, on the names written on the back of the Barberini diptych, including those of Childebert II, Faileuba, Ingund and various bishops; H. Leclercq in Cabrol, s.v. *Diptyches*, esp. § x.

[4] See Wilmart, as above, cols. 1084–6. A passage in Gregory (V. P. xvi. 2) relating a miraculous appearance of S. Martin during mass, shows that the celebrant made the sign of the cross over the oblation.

[5] Gregory (G. M. 87; V. P. vi. 7) mentions the *confractio*.

[6] In the Roman rite, as we learn from Gregory the Great (*Letters*, vii. 11), the celebrant alone recited the prayer. In Gaul the congregation joined in the Lord's Prayer (V. S. M. ii. 30; V. P. xvi. 2); this was also the usage of the Greek Church, and of the Irish (G. F. Warner, *The Stowe Missal*, p. 17; F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, pp. 170, 177).

[7] Canon 4 of the Second Council of Tours says: *Ad orandum et communicandum laïcis et feminis, sicut mos est, pateant sancta sanctorum.*

Of special services little is said by Gregory. Probably there was little essential change from the practice of Roman times in Gaul. Sidonius has left an interesting mention of a nocturnal service held in his youth on the occasion of the saint's Feast at the church of S. Just at Lyons,[2] attended by large numbers of both sexes, the bishop himself being present. After the services were over, the congregation strolled about in the warm night of early autumn, glad to be free from the closeness of the crowded building. There was gay conversation, and the telling of stories; there was dice-playing. When the light had increased, the young men started a ball-game to fill up the time until Tierce. It may be supposed that the ease of intercourse and careless gaiety described in this letter were less conspicuous among the congregations of Merovingian times; but in the districts where the Gallo-Roman element predominated, scenes of a similar kind may still have been witnessed in the sixth century.

Rogations, traditionally instituted by S. Mamertus, bishop of Vienne (463–75),[3] are several times mentioned (II. 25 (34); IV. 5, 8 (13); IX. 6, 21; X. 30). In the first passage Gregory refers to a homily on Rogations written by Avitus, a successor of Mamertus in the see of Vienne (494–517). In the second, he relates how S. Gall, bishop of Clermont (527–51), was miraculously warned that the plague would visit his city, and arranged for Rogations, involving a procession on foot all the way to the church of S. Julian at Brioude. The third tells of the adventure of S. Gall's successor, Bishop Cautinus, who, taking part in a like procession to the same shrine, though not on foot, barely escaped capture by the emissaries of Prince Chramn, by clapping spurs to his horse and reaching Brioude in the nick of time. In IX. 6 we read of the processional litanies constituting Rogations, celebrated before Ascension Day by Ragnemod, bishop of Paris, who was rudely interrupted by a religious charlatan. In IX. 21 we find King Guntram at Marseilles (in 587) commanding special Rogations when the city was visited by plague. In X. 20 we read that the plague was averted from Tours by special Rogations. We gather that in the sixth century these processional litanies were of regular occurrence at Ascensiontide, but were also ordered at times of emergency. It has been questioned whether Mamertus really instituted Rogations, or whether he elaborated and lent greater dignity to a procession of much earlier origin.[1]

---

[1] This is the form in the Stowe missal. It would appear that the sacrifice was regarded as completed as soon as the celebrant had communicated. In IX. 3 Gregory says that King Guntram *peractis sollemnibus, ad altarium communicandi gratia accessit.*

[2] *Letters*, v. 17.

[3] Sidonius twice refers to Rogations (*Letters*, v. 14; vii. 1); on the second occasion he is writing to Mamertus himself in 474.

The services and ceremonial used at baptism, marriage, and burial are hardly more than suggested. The principal allusion to baptism is in the chapter describing the baptism of Clovis (II. 22 (31), discussed in the note to that chapter). This baptism was apparently performed with great ceremony, the baptistery being draped with white hangings and fragrant with the scent of perfumed candles, but it must be remembered that Gregory's account is partly based on tradition. The baptism of Jews on a great scale was carried out at Clermont by Bishop Avitus in a baptistery outside the walls.[2] More than five hundred were baptized: tapers flamed, lamps shone, the whole city gleamed (*albicabat*) with the white-robed flock, till the joy of the citizens was as great as that once witnessed in Jerusalem, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles.[3]

The bishop who had received the child or adult after the pouring of the water (note to II. 22 (31)), or the godfather or godmother, felt bound to the child by a personal tie. Ageric, bishop of Verdun, interceded with Childebert II for the ruffianly Guntram Boso on this ground (IX. 8), and Queen Brunhild would have spared the life of the traitor Berthefred because she had been godmother to his daughter (IX. 9).

There is no account of a Christian marriage ceremony in the

---

[1] Dom de Bruyne (*Revue Bénédictine*, xxxiv (1922), pp. 14 ff.) draws attention to a tenth-century MS. written at Corbie by an anonymous writer, who declares that Rogations were descended from the Roman *Ambarvalia*. It is certain that the pagan and Christian ceremonies had points of agreement; and the early date of the MS. lends additional interest to the suggestion. But Rogations involved not only perambulation, but fasting, almsgiving, and penitential prayer.

[2] V. 6 (11): *ad baptisterium foras muraneum.*

[3] *Flagrabant caerei, lampadas refulgebant, albicabat tota civitas de grege candido, donec non minor fuit urbi gaudium quam quondam, Spiritu sancto discendente super apostolos.* This was the occasion celebrated by the poem of Fortunatus (*Carm.* v. 5), written at Gregory's request.

History,[1] for in early Merovingian times the Church was only by degrees modifying old usage; Teutonic and Roman, and marriages still followed secular lines, though the union was blessed by priest or bishop. The earliest explicit mention is found in the ninth century in a document of Pope Nicholas I.[2] From this we learn that the preliminary step consisted of the *Sponsalia*, or formal betrothal, when the families of the contracting parties gave their assent, the bridegroom presented the bride with a ring (*subarrhatio*),[3] and the dowry was settled before witnesses. At the marriage-service the bride and bridegroom communicated, a veil was placed upon both their heads, and before they proceeded to the church door to go out they were crowned with marriage crowns. The proceedings, as described by the Pope, are remarkable for their close adherence to old Roman usage, the one difference lying in the substitution of the mass for a pagan sacrifice. This conservatism in the ninth century makes it very probable that the marriage service of Gregory's time had much in common with that of Nicholas I.

A few facts as to burial are given by Gregory in G. C. 104, where he describes the funeral of S. Radegund, at which he himself officiated in the absence of Maroveus, bishop of Poitiers. The body being embalmed and placed in a lidless wooden coffin (cf. p. 331, n. 3) was carried to the place of burial by a way running past the walls of the monastery. The walls were lined with weeping and lamenting nuns, who also looked from the tower-windows. The sound of their voices, and of their hands smitten together in sign of grief, so affected the chanting clergy with the bier, that they could hardly sing the words of their antiphons.[4]

---

[1] For betrothal and marriage cf. C. Galy, *La famille à l'époque mérov*, pp. 72 and 368; A. Marignan, as above, i, pp. 283–4, 325 ff. There is an allusion in 'Fredegar' to the pagan Frankish betrothal by the *sou* and *denier*. It is related (iii. 18) that the envoy sent by Clovis to Burgundy to sue for the hand of the princess Clotild presented on his master's behalf a *solidus* and a *denarius*, '*ut mos est Francorum*'.

[2] L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrét.*, ch. xiv.

[3] To the ring was added a shoe: *Denique dato sponsae anulo, porrigit osculum, dat calciamentum* (V. P. xx; cf. V. P. xvi).

[4] *Transeuntibus autem nobis sub muro, iterum caterva virginum per fenestras turrium et ipsa quoque muri propugnacula voces proferre ac lacrimare desuper coepit, ita ut inter sonos fletuum atque conlisiones palmarum nullis possit a lacrimis temperare.* At the funeral of the murdered Prince Chlodovech, son of Chilperic, the bishop, clergy, and people went in procession with the remains to the church of S. Vincent, carrying a great number of candles (VIII. 10).

Probably black was worn as mourning. In describing the siege of Saragossa by the Franks, Gregory mentions women who joined the procession of the tunic of S. Vincent with ashes in their loosened hair, and wearing black mantles 'as if they were attending the funerals of their husbands'.[1]

Church music, as illustrated by the Antiphonary, followed the old classical traditions without any fundamental change until the end of the seventh century; even Pope Gregory introduced no change of sweeping importance.[2]

Gallican music was little esteemed across the Alps. John the Deacon, in his Life of Pope Gregory, expresses his contempt for the barbaric singing of Gaul.[3] But Fortunatus praises the choir at Paris, where the trained voices of men and boys blend in a fine harmony.[4] Efforts were certainly made to maintain a good standard. The singing contest at Orleans, noted below, proves that there were practised singers, who had perhaps been trained as boys. It may be recalled that S. Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, when a priest, taught boys their letters and the Psalms, in order that they might take part in choral services.[5] At the Council of Rome in 595 deacons were forbidden to conduct the musical part of mass, being only permitted to chant the Gospel; the psalms and antiphons were left to the subdeacons and lower clergy. The reason for this was that men with good voices had been appointed deacons merely for their musical value, as to which persons Gregory the Great said: 'they delight the congregation with their tones, but they arouse the wrath of God.'[1] It would appear that this reform had not been made in the Gallican Church in the time of Gregory of Tours, if, as seems to have been the case, the singers in the competition ordered by King Guntram at his banquet at Orleans were the deacons of the bishops present (VIII. 3). Gallus, bishop of Clermont, Gregory's uncle, had in his cathedral a fine chanter, the deacon Valentinianus, who in singing for Gallus won high praise.[2]

---

[1] III. 29: *mulieres quoque amictae nigris palleis . . . ut eas putares virorum funeribus deservire.*

[2] H. E. Wooldridge, *The Oxford History of Music*, i, p. 26. Pope Gregory did not found the *Schola Cantorum* at Rome, which was established before his time. For the Antiphonary, or Antiphoner, cf. also Dr. W. H. Frere's introductions to the *Antiphonale Sarisburiense* (Plainsong and Medieval Music Society) and to the *Graduale Sarisburiense*, published by the same society, 1894.

[3] II. 7. Italian opinion was probably the same as to music in the young English Church after Augustine, which soon began to learn from Rome. We remember the instruction 'according to the custom of the Romans' given at York by James the Deacon in 633, and that at Rochester, thirty-six years later, given by Putta, a man exceedingly skilful 'in the Roman style of church music, which he had learned from the disciples of the holy Pope Gregory' (Bede, *Eccl. Hist.* ii. 20; iv. 2; and cf. Plummer's note to the former chapter).

[4] *Carm.* ii. 13: *Ad clerum Parisiacum.* He compares the effect of their voices to that of different musical instruments. Boy choristers are mentioned, though the service was nocturnal (P. Batiffol, *Études de liturgie et d'archéologie chrét.* (1919), p. 241. Certainly no pains were spared in some of the cathedral churches in the fifth century. Sidonius, in a letter mourning the death of the distinguished Claudianus Mamertus, brother of the bishop of Vienne, says: 'Well was he skilled to chant psalms and lead a choir; for his grateful brother he taught the trained singers to chant before the altar' (*Letters*, iv. 11).

[5] V. P. viii. 2. Boy choristers (*parvuli*) are mentioned in the early accounts of the mass, cf. above, pp. 336–7. For a story of the whipping of a ten-year-old chorister see Fortunatus, *Vita Sancti Marcelli*, p. 49 in B. Krusch's edition.

Gaul seems to have remained faithful to the old Ambrosian chant, down to the close of the eighth century. In 787 Charles the Great brought back two Roman cantors to introduce the Gregorian plainsong. Two schools of singing were established at Metz and Soissons, but the teachers complained of the guttural voices of the Franks. They also taught instrumental music.[3]

Few of the marvellous tales which Gregory takes the trouble to record are more fantastic than one relating to church singing. Two priests of Bouillac (Gironde) were great friends in life, and buried on opposite sides of the church. When antiphonal music was sung, they were to be heard taking the parts demanded by their respective positions.[4]

c. Ecclesiastical Buildings other than Churches.

Adjoining the church was the church house (*domus ecclesiae* or *ecclesiastica domus*), to which references in Gregory are numerous. These terms are applied to the residence of the bishop, or of the priest in charge. As it was a rare thing for the wife of a man married at the time of his consecration to reside with him, even under the condition prescribed by the canons of various councils (p. 282), the 'church house', except in certain cathedral cities, was probably of modest dimensions. But it must have been much larger than a mere 'cell', for the bishop has a dining-room where he may entertain strangers passing through his city; [1] he probably had a spare bedroom; and if he conformed to the rule of sleeping in the same room with some of his priests, his own bedroom may have had the proportions of a small dormitory. The extra rooms, offices, and kitchens required for the household and the guests whom the bishop had to entertain, must have added to the size of the house and its dependencies. Sometimes a bishop had no church house ready to receive him. Eparchius, predecessor of Sidonius at Clermont, took up his lodging in the *salutatorium* of the church itself (II. 21).

---

[1] *Ep.* v. 57ª.

[2] He was a *vocalis* or *cantor*. Attempting once to sing when another bishop was saying mass he covered himself with ridicule: *tam deformiter cecinit ut ab omnibus inrideretur* (V. P. vi. 5).

[3] See the *Vita Karoli Magni*, in Bouquet, *Rec. des hist. des Gaules*, v, p. 185.

[4] G. C. 46: *unus quidem chorus unius vocis adiutorio additur, alius vero alterius vocis modulamine convalescit.*

On special occasions entertainment was given in the church houses, principally of cathedral churches, to clergy, and the poor on the *matricula*.[2] There was almost always an oratory attached to the church house; [3] if there was not one, a bishop would make good the omission; Gregory himself at Tours turned a *promptuarium* or store-room into an oratory.[4] We may assume that a bath-room also formed part of a *domus ecclesiae* attached to a larger church, for bath chambers, perhaps intended as much for vapour, or hot air, as for water, are mentioned more than once by Gregory. In addition, there must have been something in the nature of a study or writing-room; we can only imagine Gregory himself writing the history in a room where he had his books of reference, his heavy MSS. of the different parts of the Bible, and his MSS. of the historians. There would probably also be a business-room, where questions of church property were discussed. Here would be kept the documents concerning church lands, accounts, and other papers. During the intrigues against Theodore, bishop of Marseilles, disloyal clergy rifled the muniments (VI. *11*), and the fact that they took an inventory of the church plate suggests that this also, or part of it, may have been kept in the bishop's house. In view of these numerous demands for space, we are not surprised to learn that a bishop's house sometimes needed a *rector* or superintendent (G. C. 18), or that bishops were occasionally obliged to enlarge the building. Thus Priscus, successor of S. Nicetius at Lyons, ordered the church house to be heightened, on which occasion the beginning of the work was attended by an accident.[1] In short, though the sixth-century bishop certainly did not reside in a 'palace', his dwelling must have contained quite a large number of rooms, and must often have had an upper story.

---

[1] e. g. VII. 28 (27). Here the unlucky bishop of Toulouse had perforce to entertain the Pretender Gundovald and his violent adherents, and was rewarded by being kicked and buffeted out of his own dwelling. When Gregory was a deacon under his great-uncle Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, it is clear that there were often many people at table (V. P. viii. 4).

[2] Cf. Ruinart, *Praefatio*, § 40: *quae convivia in domo ecclesiae facta fuisse non semel Gregorius testatur.* For the church house cf. also A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 185.

[3] The oratory of Ageric, bishop of Verdun, 'which was in the church house', was ruined when he gave shelter to the conspirator Berthefred (IX. 12).

[4] G. C. 20; G. M. 33. Gregory placed there a remarkable collection of relics (V. P. ii. 3). In V. S. M. 32 we read that the adjoining house caught fire.

When a bishop visited another city to attend a Council, or on other business of the Church, we may assume that he generally stopped at a monastery or at a church house, if not that of the cathedral, then that of some other church. Thus on one occasion, Gregory, on a visit to Paris, lodged *ad basilicam sancti Iuliani*, which may mean at the house attached to the church occupied by the priest, and containing a room or rooms where other churchmen could be accommodated.[2] There were times when the calls for such accommodation may have forced bishops to find room elsewhere. At Orleans in 585, Gregory occupied a *metatum*, or lodging, where he received the visit of King Guntram (VIII. 2).[3]

As the Church owned landed domains (*villae ecclesiae*), on some of which there were dwelling-houses, the bishop appears sometimes to have had a residence in the country, to which he could withdraw. Thus the church at Paris had a *villa*, apparently at Civray-sur-Cher, where Germanus stayed on his way from Paris to Tours.[4] A *villa* belonging to the diocese of

---

[1] IV. 36. A disorderly deacon whom Nicetius had often been compelled to punish, climbed to the top of the building when the roof was being removed, and expressed his joy at treading under foot that which had covered the head of his enemy. The words were hardly out of his mouth when the beam on which he stood went from under his feet and he fell headlong to his death.

[2] IX. 6. If there were monks at the basilica of S. Julian, as there were at the basilica of S. Martin at Tours, Gregory may have been accommodated by them.

[3] But this 'lodging', too, may have been connected with the church of S. Avitus, which is mentioned as being 'there' (*ibi*).

[4] V. M. ii. 12: *ad villam ecclesiae suae*. Macharius, bishop of Angoulême; who was a great church-builder, bequeathed *villae* to the Church on his death (V. 36).

Tours was coveted by Felix, bishop of Nantes, who on Gregory's refusal to yield it to him poured forth torrents of abuse.[1] The church houses of priests or deacons must have been smaller than the bishop's, though an archpriest, or an archdeacon, who transacted much church business, would have required several rooms. Priests in small country places, or deacons serving minor churches, probably had very strait quarters. Cautinus, afterwards bishop of Clermont, was in earlier life deacon of the church at Issoire, Puy-de-Dôme, where the holy Stremonius was buried (G. C. 29). He slept in a ' cell ' adjoining the wall of the church ' against the windows in the upper part of the church '. He was thus on one occasion able to witness a marvellous vision in the church below him.[2]

Buildings other than the church fabric were connected with it by ties of religion or charity. Such were those of a memorial kind, preserved or erected at the place where a famous saint had died ; these were sometimes kept up as places of pilgrimage. The death chamber seems to have been maintained as far as possible in its original state ; at any rate the spot where the saint breathed his last was so preserved. In the *cellula* at Candes where Martin died, part of the floor was surrounded by a rail (*cancellus*), from which a silk curtain hung ; here the saint had lain in ashes with a stone for a pillow (V. S. M. iv. 23). This *cellula* had a richly-endowed *matricula*, or enrolled body of poor, who here received relief. Miracles were claimed, and there was a regular resort of visitors (*ibid.* ii. 19). People stayed for long periods praying at the cell (*ibid.* ii. 45). A glass *patena* belonging to the saint was preserved there, and people were cured by drinking water from it (*ibid.* iv. 10). At Lyons was shown the bed of S. Patroclus, covered with a fair pall (V. P. ix. 8).[3] Under this bed were laid persons suffering from fever, the saint being famed for his healing power in such cases.[1] Miracles connected with the lamps burning in such a place were naturally celebrated.[2]

---

[1] V. 5 : *evomuit in me, . . . plenus furore opprobria mille.* It is not stated where this church domain was situated. If outside the diocese of Tours, the passage would imply that the metropolitan (Gregory) had control of Church lands belonging to his province, and not merely to those in his own diocese.

[2] *Igitur dum nocte quadam in lectulo cellulae suae quae huic basilicae adhaerebat, decumberet, audivit psallentium.* He got up and looked down into the interior of the church—*erat enim cellula illa in superiore contra fenestras templi* ; there he saw white figures holding candles at the tomb of Stremonius. Next day he ordered the tomb to be railed off and veiled in gleaming clothes (*palleolis nitentibus*).

[3] An *aedituus* was in charge. This is the term used for the verger in the church ; but perhaps it is more natural to assume that the bed remained in the actual death-chamber ; the *aedituus* would then be the caretaker.

Hospitals also stood in a near relation to the church, and were sometimes privileged to contain the body of a saint. Thus Childebert I and Queen Ultrogotho founded a hospital at Lyons,[3] and Agricola, bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, built a hospital for lepers outside the city, to which he translated the remains of S. Desideratus, a famous healer.[4]

---

[1] *Frigoritici sub eo siti compresso vapore ac frigore salvantur.*

[2] One lamp burned here for forty days unreplenished: *absque ullius fomenti adiutorio perduravit splendens.* Cf. A. Marignan, as above, ii, p. 208.

[3] The *cura aegrotantium* is specially mentioned in connexion with this foundation. For this and other early hospitals see Dom Leclercq's article, *Hôpitaux*, in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, cols. 2765 ff. In Marculf, Bk. II. i, is a *formula* for the building of a hospital by a benefactor (M. G. H., *Legum*, *Sect.* v, pp. 70–4: ed. K. Zeumer).

[4] G. C. 85: *aedificato exsinodochio* (*xenodochio*) *suburbano.*

IV

MONASTICISM AND ASCETICISM

a. Growth and Discipline of Monasteries.

THE coenobitic life spread very rapidly in Gaul in the fourth century. Though Paulinus of Nola may overestimate the number of religious houses and of their inmates, yet at the close of the century, when he wrote, they were doubtless numerous.[1] But the sixth century witnessed a great expansion; scanty as the sources are, it has been estimated that to a pre-existing number of forty, some two hundred were now added.[2]

The great progress towards an ordered monastic life had been made in Provence and in the islands off the Mediterranean coast. Honoratus, about 410, had founded his monastery on one of the islands of Lérins;[3] soon afterwards John Cassian[4] founded S. Victor of Marseilles; other monasteries followed.[5]

---

[1] *Ep.* xviii. 4. Martin had founded the monastery of Ligugé in 360, about five miles south of Poitiers; not long afterwards he founded Marmoutier outside Tours. Ligugé was probably the first monastery established on the soil of Gaul. These early monastic centres were rather groups of ascetic cells than *coenobiae*. So S. Victricius, soldier and ascetic, attracted disciples living the ascetic life in the region of Boulogne and Thérouanne. Paulinus himself, a native of Aquitaine, never accepted coenobitic life; at Nola he lived with his wife, surrounded by a small community. In a similar way lived Sulpicius Severus, the friend and biographer of S. Martin, in Gaul; the brothers had their cells; there was a common dining-room and a chapel or oratory. His mother, Bessula, also lived with him.

[2] This calculation was made by Mabillon and the Benedictine authors of *Gallia Christiana* (H. Leclercq in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', col. 424). Dom Leclercq notes that Gregory does not seem to have fully appreciated the importance of the monasteries in the social and economic life of the country, and that he mentions only a restricted number of the houses which existed in his time.

[3] For Lérins see A. Cooper-Marsden, *The History of the Island of Lérins*, Cambridge, 1913, and the references in U. Chevalier, *Rép. des Sources hist. du moyen âge, Topo-bibliographie*, s.v. Lérins.

[4] Cassian (b. 350–70) had been a monk in Palestine. He afterwards made a journey lasting about seven years among the Egyptian monasteries, which gave rise to his two works on monasticism, the *De coenobiorum institutis*, and the *Collationes* (printed in Migne, *Patr. Lat.* xlix). About A.D. 400 he went to Constantinople, where he knew John Chrysostom; he may afterwards have visited Antioch and Mesopotamia. Later he settled at Marseilles, where his books were written.

[5] For these monasteries see the short account, with references, by Dom Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, ii, cols. 3196 ff. Houses,

At first the eremitic spirit strove to hold its own against that of life in a community, but gradually the latter prevailed. The instruction of Cassian and Caesarius of Arles, formerly abbot of Lérins, and the election to bishoprics of other monks from that learned community, influenced the growth of monasticism first in Provence, then across the Cévennes, where the half-eremitical groups which had continued from the time of Martin were brought into relation with the advanced communities of Lérins, Marseilles, and other houses.[1]

The monasteries in the sixth century, despite many abuses, presented to a disorderly and war-ridden world an example of relative order and peace. They were no longer the centres of learning which they had been; the schools of Lérins, of S. Victor at Marseilles, of Marmoutier at Tours, had decayed; the monks were ignorant and often undisciplined. Yet such was the violence and corruption without their walls that they seemed the sole homes of security and peace. It was the state of affairs which again prevailed five hundred years after, when the outer world was so lawless that, as in certain later periods of the Middle Ages, to souls loving quietude the monastery was the only place in which a man might decently live.[2] Few Merovingian monasteries were large; the average house may have contained less than twenty monks.[3] But the seed was soon carried abroad, and communities spread over the whole country. Sometimes a new house began as an offshoot of an old; but often, in a district as yet without communities, the beginning was due to the influence of individuals. Gregory has interesting remarks as to the manner in which monasticism expanded. There was a founder, generally a holy man, and

---

afterwards celebrated, were founded in the Jura. The activity of Caesarius, bishop of Arles, dates from the end of the fifth century and the first half of the sixth.

[1] Sidonius requested his friend Volusianus, familiar with the discipline of Lérins, to bring order into the monastery of S. Cirgues in Auvergne, which had fallen upon evil days under an incapable abbott (*Ep.* vii. 17).

[2] Monks were drawn from all ranks and classes, from nobles and high officials down to manumitted slaves (Leclercq, as above, col. 424).

[3] We may remember that the usual Benedictine quorum for a new house consisted of twelve monks and an abbot, and that when secessions occurred small numbers like this were the rule; thus in England, Waverley Abbey was founded in 1128 with the traditional number (G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 417). The second in command, or prior, was called *praepositus*; he assisted the abbot in maintaining discipline (cf. Plummer, *Baedae opera hist.*, Intr., p. xxviii).

often an eremite, like Abraham, the contemporary of Sidonius Apollinaris, who, after living the life of a recluse, established a community at S. Cirgues.[1] An oratory was first built, and with this as centre a small group was formed under a leader. Thus S. Ursus built an oratory at Senaparia (Sennevières) in the territory of Tours. Establishing Leobatius there with a small community, and leaving him a Rule, he went some little distance away to Loches and founded another house, the church of which occupied the site of the present parish church.[2] Brachio, son of Sigivald, governor of Auvergne for King Theuderic, and converted by the eremite S. Aemilianus, received, on the death of the saint, land from his sister Ranihild in Puy-de-Dôme, where he founded the monastery of S. Saturnin de Vensat. Leaving this place he proceeded to Touraine, where he founded two other monasteries, journeying to and fro between these and his original foundation.[3] A man named Augustus who had built an oratory to S. Martin at Bourges, and been cured by the relics of the saint placed within it, collected a few monks and lived with them under a rule. Summoned by Bishop Probianus (already bishop in 550), he was appointed abbot of S. Symphorian, a monastery erected by that prelate near the city. He continued to rule his old monastery, but appointed a prior (*praepositus*) to be responsible for its regular government.[4] Royal foundations were not infrequent, and began early in the century. Sigismund, king of Burgundy, refounded the monastery of S. Maurice at Agaune in the Valais, erecting its church and buildings.[5] After the murder of his son (p. 97) he withdrew there to fast and pray, apparently arranging for perpetual psalmody in expiation of the crime.[6]

---

[1] Sidonius, *Ep.*, as above; V. P. iii. 1. This foundation of an eremite could extend a large hospitality to the people, flocking to it on feast-days. It was the custom to provide wine in the atrium: *ad reficiendum populum.*

[2] V. P. xviii. 1: *Aedificato oratorio monasterium stabilivit commissamque Leobatio proposito* (*praeposito*) *summam regulae monasterium aliud statuit quod nunc Loccis vocant.*

[3] V. P. xii. 33. Brachio, whose name has been conjectured to be a Latin form of the German *Bärchen* (little bear), died in 576 (H. F. v. 12).

[4] G. C. 79. Eparchius, friend of Sidonius, founded a monastery in the hills, where he went into retreat at Quadragesima, returning home at Easter (II. 21).

[5] III. 5: *monasteriumque Agaunensim sollerti cura cum domibus basilicisque aedificavit.*

[6] *Psallentium ibi adsiduum instituens, Lugduno regressus est* (*ibid.*). This was the *Laus perennis*, on which see p. 373–4.

Soon afterwards, having been defeated by the Franks, he attempted to reach Agaune, but was captured by his enemies.[1] The monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, built by Radegund, queen of Lothar I, was doubly a royal foundation, for the foundress was a queen, and Lothar himself provided a rich endowment.[2] Childebert I, in some ways a religious man, founded a monastery at Arles (p. 354).

The growth of property by endowments obscured early Christian ideals among communities which possessed more lands than they could till by the hands of their members. But from the point of view of national life this bad effect was partly compensated by the advantage to the poor who lived and worked on land held by religious houses. The poor man was better off in the service of an abbey; in these early days the monastery had the good will as well as power, and of few among the landowners of the sixth century could so much be said.[3] But there was certainly backsliding from early ideals. Gregory gives us various indications of a tendency towards luxury through the growth of monastic possessions. S. Lupicinus obtained for his monastery from King Chilperic of Burgundy an annual grant of three hundred bushels of corn, a proportionate quantity of wine, and a hundred gold pieces for clothing.[4] And perhaps even before the securing of this grant, the abbot, visiting the kitchen, found an unmonastic profusion of dishes preparing for the midday meal. He forthwith ordered a great cauldron to be made ready, into which the contents of the several dishes were promiscuously thrown, whereupon twelve indignant monks[5] for a while deserted the monastery. But the régime of the average well-ordered houses was still very far from luxurious. Except on Saturday and Sunday there was only one meal, on those two days there were two.[6]

---

[1] III. 6.

[2] See Radegund's letter in Bk. IX. 42.

[3] The various immunities and privileges obtained by those who lived about monasteries led to settlements which in later days grew into towns.

[4] V. P. i. 2. Longnon believed this place to be Saint-Oyand de Joux, afterwards S. Claude (*Géogr.*, p. 199).

[5] *Viri cotornosi atque elati* (*ibid.*).

[6] *Prandium* and *coena* (see Dom Leclercq, article 'Cénobitisme', in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*). Vegetarianism was a very general rule, but poultry was allowed to invalids (*ibid.*, article, 'Gallicane, Église', col. 428), and fish could be eaten on special days. Fasts took place on several occasions in the year; the chief was during Lent.

The information given by Gregory as to the monasteries of his time is scanty and casually imparted. As bishop of Tours, he had the supervision of all the monasteries in the diocese. Quite close to his city were two famous houses which he must have known exceedingly well, the abbey at the basilica or church of S. Martin, and *Maius Monasterium*, or Marmoutier. We know that in his frequent sojourns at the basilica he must have been very familiar with the monastery attached to it; but he tells us nothing of its outward appearance, its interior economy, or the abbots and monks then living in its walls; it is the same with regard to Marmoutier. His omissions are especially to be deplored with regard to these two houses, for our knowledge of their early history is of the scantiest. Gregory just mentions at the end of the history that Leo, thirteenth bishop of Tours, had formerly been abbot of S. Martin's,[1] and we know that the date of his abbacy must have been about 526. As to the other monks and abbots who in his own time lived in close proximity to his venerated church, he preserves silence. In like manner, in his *Vitae Patrum*, c. 20, he just mentions Eustochius, abbot of Marmoutier. The consequence is that very little is known of either house from the time of its foundation down to the Carolingian age.[2] The fullest details in Gregory with regard to a monastic establishment concern a nunnery, that of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, and these are given through the accident of a riot among the nuns with the suppression of which he was concerned (cf. p. 360). Though

---

[1] X. 31: *ex abbate basilicae Sancti Martini.*

[2] The Benedictines of S. Maur (*Gallia Christiana*, vol. xiv, cols. 152 ff.) tell us what is to be known. *De primis quidem collegii Martiniani exordiis*, they say, *nil certum habemus*. The monks were probably few in number; there were some in residence at the time of Pope Adeodatus, about 674, as there were when Charles the Great placed Alcuin, who was only a deacon, at the head of the house. Perhaps Alcuin did not discourage a tendency on the part of the monks to adopt the freer life of canons; this at any rate occurred; and in 806 Leo III confirmed the privilege which they claimed. S. Martin's was now regarded as an *Ecclesia collegiata*, though later in the century there were again abbots. In the eleventh century Hugh Capet appropriated the title of Abbot of S. Martin for the head of the royal family, after which time the monastery was actually governed by *decani*. Cf. also E. R. Vaucelle, *La collégiale de Saint-Martin*, Tours (L. Péricart), 1907.

Of Marmoutier we know little more, for the early centuries, than that it was founded by S. Martin himself on the other side of the Loire in 372 (Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Mart*. ch. 7), and that after his death there was a great influx of monks, who constructed cells or settled in caves in the rock. From that time till the sack by the Northmen in 853 we have no details (*Gallia Christ.*, as above, col. 192).

Fortunatus is no more communicative than Gregory on the subject of the life led by monks, the chance of his position, as the friend and man of affairs of Radegund in the happy days before the riot, enabled him to leave behind in various poems accounts of pleasant hours passed in the company of this great lady and the abbess Agnes (p. 445).

We learn nothing as to the habit worn by the monks in Gaul. Perhaps it was based upon the costume of the Egyptian monks, allowance being made for climatic differences. In Egypt, the *colobium*, a sleeveless tunic, was worn with an over-garment of leather, a girdle, and a mantle with a hood (*κουκόυλλιον*) which on occasion could be drawn up over the head. Most monks went barefoot except at certain seasons, the general use of sandals being reserved for the old and invalid. But there was no hard and fast rule, and Cassian observes that generally the local dress was adopted in its simplest and poorest forms.[1] S. Benedict allowed two tunics or shirts, two cowls, a scapular, shoes and stockings, a girdle, and a handkerchief.[2] As to other accessories we are no better informed.[3] Perhaps even before S. Benedict, the monk had his straw mattress, blanket, coverlet, and pillow.[4]

In the sixth century the shadow of the bishop loomed large in monastic affairs. Though the abbot was formally elected by the community,[5] the bishop might reject the person chosen, and substitute a man of his own choice. It was natural that as monasteries increased in wealth they should have chafed at this episcopal control.[1] And royal or noble founders took care as far as possible to safeguard their foundations from encroachment or usurpation on the part of the bishop;[2] they objected to any interference in the detail of administration, or any diminution of its privileges. Thus Childebert I, founding a monastery at Arles about 550, requested Pope Vigilius to confirm its regulations by his apostolic authority,[3] and the pope complied. Dynamius, ex-governor of Provence, having built or enlarged, in conjunction with his sister, a nunnery at Marseilles, asked Gregory the Great to grant it privileges, and especially to define the powers of the diocesan bishop.[4] Gregory decreed that on the death of the abbess her successor should be chosen by the community from among their own number, though the bishop should institute the new abbess, if he considered her fit for her office; he also ordered that the bishop and clergy should in no way interfere with the property or with the management of the house. In general, however, the control of monastic houses passed more and more into the hands of the bishops. The extension of their power was effected by the decrees of episcopal councils, which naturally took the bishop's point of view rather than that of the abbot. Thus in 508 the Council of Agde decreed that no new monastery should be built without the bishop's consent. Two Councils of Orleans in 511 and 533 insisted on the subordination of abbots to the bishop of the diocese.[5] In 554 the Council of Arles forbade an abbot to travel any long distance from his monastery without the bishop's consent;[1] nor might he alienate any property belonging to the House.

---

[1] *De institutis coenobitarum*, i, ch. 2, 10. S. Martin and many of his monks in the second half of the fourth century wore a simple tunic of camel's hair with a cord round the waist (Sulpicius Severus, *De vita B. Martini*, ch. vii). Cf. P. Batiffol, *Études de lit. et d'arch. chrét.*, 1919, p. 265; Dom de Bruyne in *Revue Bénédictine*, xxxiii (1921), pp. 55 ff.; and Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Benedictine monachism* (1919), p. 151. Cf. also A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 237.

[2] A spare tunic was used for sleeping in, and if going on a journey the monk was provided with drawers.

[3] S. Martin slept in ashes on the floor in his ordinary hair garment, but probably others had a plank bed with coverings. For seat, a three-legged stool sufficed, though Sulpicius Severus, Martin's friend, sat on a camel's-hair rug on the ground. Cups and dishes were of wood or earthenware.

[4] S. Benedict, Rule 55.

[5] V. P. xvi. 1, of the election of S. Venantius at Tours: *eligentibus fratribus*. The king might also interfere with election. But despite this nominal control from without, the monasteries had much internal freedom and their constitution rested on a popular basis. The abbot had the final decision, but on important questions he would consult the whole community, in lesser matters taking the advice of the elder monks.

---

[1] After the Merovingian period, forged documents purporting to be of that date were produced to show that episcopal rights had been abandoned (Pfister, in Lavisse, as above, p. 229). This practice recurred in later medieval times.

[2] Radegund appointed the first abbess at Poitiers (IX. 42: *abbatissam institui*).

[3] The precaution was necessary, for at a later time the bishop of Arles sought to extend his control, whereupon monks were sent to Rome, Gregory the Great then being pope. Gregory, always sympathetic with the monastic point of view, confirmed the decree of his predecessor (*Ep.* ix. 216). Radegund gave most careful thought to the constitution of her monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers (IX. 39). But her diocesan bishop, far from interfering with the house, pointedly held aloof from it, to the distress of the foundress.

[4] *Ep.* vii. 12. It was a picturesque detail that the bishop should only celebrate mass in the chapel of the monastery once a year; then only might his chair, the symbol of his authority, be introduced, and it must be withdrawn after mass was over (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, ii, p. 83). At other times mass was to be said by a priest nominated by the bishop.

[5] Council of 511, can. 19; Council of 533, can. 21. The Council of 511 forbade any monk to withdraw into a hermitage without the bishop's leave (can. 22).

Internal discipline depended on the character and influence of the abbot. If through his own worth, or important family connexions, he commanded respect, all was well; if he was personally contemptible, or if not strong enough to maintain discipline, disintegration might ensue. The responsibility for maintaining discipline was shared by the provost, or prior.[2] A few abbots set an example of severity. Among these was Nicetius, who, before he became bishop of Trèves, would have had his monks keep their mouths closed except when opened to utter praise to God.[3] We detect stern and unbending spirit in the abbot of a monastery at Bordeaux, who warned a certain young enthusiast as to the hardships of the monastic life, and seemed to discourage his zeal. When the young man, by the fervency of his prayer, afterwards saved the harvest for the monastery, this abbot rebuked him, had him whipped, and then confined to his cell for seven days without food, to protect him from the sin of vainglory.[4] Other heads of houses fell into the opposite extreme. The gentle abbot Sunniulf, who attempted to rule his monks by persuasion rather than by discipline, was warned by a Dantesque vision seen in a dream, and thereafter became more severe.[5] Some abbots themselves set the worst possible example to their monks.[6] The golden mean was reached by a few superiors who understood the value of work and discipline. The abbot Ursus commanded that his monks should labour with their hands and win their sustenance in the sweat of their brows.[7] He had perhaps more of the spirit of Benedict than of Francis, dwelling with insistence on the necessity of personal toil, and quoting the well-known words of S. Paul.[1] Probably no Gallican monastery attained so high a standard of enthusiasm and ascetic zeal as the houses in the Vosges founded by S. Columban (p. 368) ; but this zeal did not long survive the departure of the Irish saint for Italy ; it was not in harmony either with the Gallo-Roman or the Frankish temperament.

---

[1] Can. 3.

[2] According to the Benedictine Rule, the prior was appointed by the abbot in council with chosen members of the community (Rule 65). He could be deposed by the abbot.

[3] *Et os non ad aliud aperire nisi ad laudem Dei. . . . Unus enim ei semper erat rigor in prosperis et adversis.* This hard equanimity coloured his subsequent conduct as bishop (V. P. xvii).

[4] IV. *34*: *Oportet enim te, fili, in timore et servitio Dei humiliter crescere, non prodigiis atque virtutibus gloriari.* We read in Gregory of no such savagery on the part of abbots as must have existed in later Frankish times (eighth century), when they had to be forbidden to blind and mutilate monks.

[5] IV. *33*. Sunniulf died in the great visitation of plague in 571.

[6] The worst case was perhaps that of Dagulf (viii. 19). There were bad abbots in Italy also; cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, i. 2, 7.

[7] *Victum a terra in sudore vultus exigere* (V. P. xviii. 1).

It was the rule to exclude all women other than nuns from the men's monasteries, and this exclusion was in theory maintained down to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond.[2] But even in the sixth century there were probably breaches enough, though it may be assumed to have been in general observed. The harshness of excluding women from access to the tombs of the great saints buried within the walls must have been resented in an age when the miracle-working tomb was regarded as all-important for the restoration of bodily health. We see a reflection of this feeling in the decision to bury the body of S. Romanus, not within his monastery, where women would have been denied free access to it, but in a shrine on a hill some distance away ; the women were thus able to get their full share of miraculous cures.[3] The presence of women might be forbidden, but in one case a woman remained in a monastery for a whole generation by cutting her hair and passing for a monk. This was a girl named Papula, whom fond parents sought to prevent from becoming a nun ; she therefore ran away from home, and became a 'monk' at Tours, where she remained undiscovered for thirty years, and where she died, after she had actually refused election as abbot.[4] For discipline in nunneries see pp. 358 ff.

---

[1] *Laborate manibus ut habeatis unde retribuere necessitatem patientibus . . . quia qui non laborat nec manducet* (*ibid*). Cassian, in his *De institutis Coenobiorum*, Bk. X, inculcated manual work, which was the rule in Egypt ; he included the copying of manuscripts. It was only in exceptional monasteries like Lérins that monks received any literary education. The average monk could read the Psalter and the Lives of the ascetic Fathers, but did not pursue any advanced studies.

[2] Coulton, as above, ch. 28.

[3] V. P. i. 6. For 'double monasteries' see p. 368, n. 3. S. Yrieix (Aredius), when he started his monastery, was helped by his mother, who superintended the feeding and clothing of the community (V. P. xvii).

[4] G. C. 16. Miracles were performed at her tomb, fevers being cured there.

b. Nunneries.

Monasteries of nuns (*monasteria sanctimonialium*) were, like other monasteries, placed under the general protection of the bishop in whose diocese they were erected.[1] Thus Gregory had a responsibility for monasteries in the territory of Tours, and Maroveus of Poitiers for those in his diocese, including the celebrated house founded by S. Radegund.

Religious houses for women often grew up, like those for men, by a grouping round some person reputed for holiness, usually a lover of solitude and a recluse, whose example attracted other persons desirous of withdrawing from the world. Thus, on the death of her two little girls, a married lady of Chartres, who afterwards became S. Monigund, left the world and became an anchoress.[2] She occupied a cell with one small window, and lived upon a mixture of flour and ashes. At first she had a servant to attend on her, who, however, soon went off and left her alone. She then moved into Tours, but still occupied a similar cell. Finally she founded a nunnery, because so many devout women gathered about her. Her nuns had to live on barley bread, with a little wine on feast-days, and that freely mixed with water. They slept on rush mats laid upon wooden benches; they were allowed no such luxury as mattresses stuffed either with hay or feathers.[3] S. Monigund became famous for her miracles. In her lifetime she had the repute of curing all human ills, and after her death her remains were held to retain the same miraculous power.[4]

While in the monastery for men all classes appear to have been freely represented, some nunneries, like those of the later Middle Ages, tended to be more exclusive and aristocratic. Most nunneries were small, and when the foundress was of high birth the complement could often be made up by relatives, friends, and women of similar social standing. This aristocratic quality was a doubtful advantage, as the high-born ladies were little amenable to discipline, especially if they had been compelled to leave the world when they felt no vocation for a religious life. They demanded and received exceptional privileges, and would not tolerate strict government from an abbess of much lower birth than their own.[2]

---

[1] In some cases, as in that of Radegund's foundation, the king might occupy a special position as protector. The founder or foundress of a monastery had, during lifetime, a very privileged position, like that of Radegund herself, or that of Ingitrude at Tours.

[2] V. P. xix.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.* Fever patients were healed by kissing the pall laid on her tomb; the lame walked, the blind saw, devils came out from the possessed.

The religious of royal birth was perhaps seldom a model of what a nun should be. The princess Berthefled, daughter of King Charibert, was a member of a convent at Tours. On one occasion, when the foundress was absent, she broke bounds and went into the territory of Le Mans. She is described by Gregory, who must have known her personally, as a greedy, sleepy woman, very negligent in her religious duties.[3] The nunnery at Tours in which she displayed her failings was founded by Ingitrude, a lady connected with the royal house, 'in the atrium' of the church of S. Martin.[4] This Ingitrude played in relation to her foundation a similar part to that played by Radegund at Poitiers. She appointed her own abbess, and probably herself occupied an independent 'cell', which may have been outside the main building.[5] She finally persuaded her married daughter Berthegund to become abbess, inducing her to leave her husband for the purpose.[6] Berthegund obeyed; and, when her husband came to claim her, refused to return, on the ground that there was no place for the married in heaven.[7]

---

[1] For the mutinous spirit in the Middle Ages see E. B. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*; and G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, pp. 405–11.

[2] This may have been one of the causes of the great riot at the Monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers. The first abbess, Agnes, had been a dependant and protégée of Radegund; her successor, Leubovera, does not appear to have been of high birth. In Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* we read of many Anglo-Saxon queens and princesses who entered English monasteries, e.g. Queen Etheldreda at Ely (iv. 19), and Hilda, Elfled, and Eanfled at Whitby (iv. 23, 26).

[3] IX. 33: *erat enim gulae et somno dedita et nullam de officio Dei curam habens.* Charibert and his family did not set a good example in their relation to nunneries. He himself was excommunicated by S. Germanus, bishop of Paris, for marrying the nun Marcovefa (IV. 19 (26)), and the proceedings of his daughter at Poitiers suggest that the atmosphere of her home had not been one of order and devotion.

[4] IX. 33: *Ingytrudis, quae monasterium in atrio sancti Martini instituerat . . . monasterium puellarum infra atrium sancti Martini.* Probably its buildings abutted upon, or overlooked, the atrium; about this court there seem to have been dwellings occupied by persons of standing who from time to time took sanctuary there; such were Merovech, son of King Chilperic, Duke Guntram Boso, and Eberulf, the Neustrian chamberlain.

[5] At Rome, three aunts of Gregory the Great lived in their own house (*Ep.* iv. 16); while his mother had a private cell near the basilica of S. Paul (John the Deacon, *Vita*, i. 9).

[6] IX. 33.

[7] *Regredere hinc et gubernare liberos nostros, nam ego non revertar tecum. Non enim videbit regnum Dei coniugio copulatus.*

Gregory himself now intervened as bishop of the diocese. He read to her the fourteenth canon of the Council of Gangres, declaring *anathema* any woman who as an honourable wife left her husband on this very plea that the married had no part in the glory of the heavenly kingdom. Berthegund, afraid of excommunication, now returned to her husband, remaining with him four years. At the end of that period her mother again sent for her, and once more she obeyed, this time loading several boats with property of her own and of her husband's. On this occasion the husband made his voice heard to such purpose that the mother sent Berthegund to stay with Bertram, bishop of Bordeaux, her own son. The husband followed, but could obtain no redress. He met Bertram later at Orleans, roundly accused him in the presence of King Guntram. The king, who acknowledged Berthegund to be his kinswoman, ordered that she should return to her home. Bertram, feigning to agree, sent a secret message to his sister, warning her to take sanctuary in the church of S. Martin, which she did. The husband came and went; once more she had refused to follow him. Some time afterwards, on the death of Bertram, she felt the loneliness of her state, and went to Poitiers. This time Ingitrude failed to move her, and a bitter dispute about property arose between the two women which was never settled (IX. 33). When Ingitrude felt her end approaching she appointed her niece as abbess, an act arousing among the nuns an opposition which had to be quelled by Gregory (X. 12). Before dying, she declared that Berthegund must never be admitted to the nunnery, or suffered to pray at her tomb. Her behest was obeyed, and her daughter was refused admittance. But this was a woman not easily thwarted. She hastened to Childebert's court, asking to be appointed abbess in her mother's room. Childebert gave her a new diploma, granting to her full possession of both her father's and her mother's property, including everything bequeathed by Ingitrude to the monastery.[1] Berthegund returned to Tours, and so completely stripped the nunnery of its furniture that it was left absolutely bare. Then, collecting a troop of worthless fellows, she caused the crops on the estates given to the nunnery by the pious to be carried away to Poitiers, to which place she withdrew, to pass much of her time abusing and speaking evil of the abbess, who was nevertheless her nearest relation.

---

[1] It does not appear that the king assumed any authority with regard to the office of abbess, which was left to Ingitrude's niece; his *praeceptio* only gave Berthegund authority to remove property (X. 12).

The difficulty of controlling nuns of royal station is further exemplified in the case of Theudechild, queen of Charibert, shut up by Guntram, after his brother's death, in a monastery at Arles. This lady found the fasting and vigils irksome, and arranged an elopement to Spain with a certain Visigoth. All was ready, and her effects were packed, when the vigilance of the abbess thwarted the scheme; and the high position of the would-be fugitive did not protect her from drastic punishment. She was severely beaten and placed under supervision; her only escape, after no ordinary suffering, was by the gate of death.[1] This would probably not have happened had she been a princess born, but though a queen, she came into the world a herdsman's daughter. The notorious riot at Poitiers was largely due to the presence among the nuns of two princesses, Clotild, daughter of Charibert, and Basina, daughter of Chilperic.[2] It occurred after the death of Radegund and of the first abbess, Agnes. The next abbess, Leubovera, was evidently incapable of preserving discipline. The two princesses took an arrogant tone, declaring themselves treated in a manner unworthy of their rank. Inducing a number of other nuns to follow them, they left the monastery, and tramped on foot to Tours, arriving on the 1st March 587.[3] There they appealed to Gregory through their ringleader, Clotild. He warned her that they had laid themselves open to excommunication by breaking bounds. They did not give way, but suffered themselves to be dissuaded from proceeding forthwith to the king (Childebert), and consented to await the summer. Clotild then went to King Guntram, leaving the other runaway nuns at Tours.[4]

---

[1] IV. 19 (26): *eam graviter caesam custodiae mancipare praecepit; in qua usque ad exitum vitae praesentis, non mediocribus attrita passionibus, perduravit.*

[2] By Queen Audovera. In G. C. 104 Gregory mentions the presence of royal nuns in this community, with others from 'senatorial' families.

[3] IX. 39. It was wet; the roads were deep in mud; and no one gave them anything to eat. To leave a monastery was a most serious offence, and was so treated in the Rule of Caesarius.

[4] We learn from Gregory's account (G. C. 104) of the scene at Radegund's funeral that the monastery of the Holy Cross was exceptionally large. It was supposed to contain some two hundred nuns.

She was kindly received, and the king agreed to send a commission of bishops to inquire into the causes of the dispute between the nuns and their abbess. On her return to Tours, she found that many of the nuns had re-entered the world by the way of matrimony. The rest after waiting in vain for the commission of bishops, had gone back to Poitiers, but not to the convent. They made their head-quarters the church of S. Hilary, where they gathered about them a band of criminals and ruffians led by one ' Childeric the Saxon ' (X. 22). They declared an open state of war, proudly boasting that they were of royal blood, and would not re-enter the monastery unless Leubovera were first expelled. To them in their defiant mood came their own bishop, Maroveus, with Gundegisel of Bordeaux, Nicasius of Angoulême, and Safarius of Périgueux. These bishops, as a sequel to a vain appeal, visited the nuns with excommunication, whereupon they were set upon by the ruffians in the very church of S. Hilary, and so violently mishandled that they were beaten to the ground and hardly able to rise, while their deacons and other clerics left the church with bloody heads, dispersing in panic-stricken flight. After this, Clotild, through a band of her satellites, seized lands of the community, beating all those in charge of them who resisted; she threatened to break into the nunnery itself and fling Leubovera from the windows. King Childebert now at last intervened, ordering Count Macco to quell the disorder by the secular arm.[1] The maltreated bishops sent a formal letter of complaint to their brethren assembled in council in Guntram's kingdom; but all that they obtained was advice to use the lenience counselled by S. Paul (1 Tim. iv. 2 and 8), and to overcome the turbulent nuns by prayer. Meanwhile the abbess sent to the bishops of the surrounding sees copies of the letter formerly addressed by Radegund to their predecessors.[2] In this document the ex-queen appealed to the bishops as a body to protect her foundation from any abuse of influence or power, either on the part of the bishop of Poitiers or of any other person, and to prevent any interference with its endowments, or any modification of the Rule. She further entreated the kings[1] to see that after her death neither the convent nor its abbess should suffer indignity or harm.

---

[1] He later commissioned a priest, Teuthar, to attempt an agreement between the nuns and the abbess; the mission failed because the nuns demanded that they should first be readmitted to communion, and the bishops refused this condition.

[2] The letter is given in full by Gregory (IX. 42); it is long, and its text is often difficult.

The feud between the abbess and the nuns continued through the winter; some of the rebels returned to their homes, or to convents which they had left to join the community at Poitiers. Those who remained with Clotild and Basina were torn by dissensions as to precedence. Perhaps in order to keep her male satellites together,[2] Clotild finally ordered a nocturnal raid on the monastery, with the object of kidnapping the abbess.[3] This unfortunate superior was at the moment suffering from gout, and, hearing the tumult without, caused herself to be carried into the oratory, where was placed the *arca*, or coffer, with the relics collected by Radegund, including the fragment of the True Cross presented by Justin and Sophia (note to IX. 40). The ruffians broke in, carrying lights, and found her lying on the ground before the reliquary. One of them was preparing to kill her with his sword, when a less brutal comrade stabbed him before he could act. The prioress Justina, Gregory's niece, bravely covered the abbess with the altar-cloth; in the general confusion she was taken by the band for her superior and dragged out of the building, but when her captors had almost brought her as far as their head-quarters the dawn showed them their error, and she was released. They then went back for the abbess, whom they placed under guard in the part of the precincts of S. Hilary's where Basina had her lodging. Soon afterwards, as night came on, they once more visited the nunnery, and lighted a fire in a court, on which they threw a tar-barrel. By the light of this fire they carried off all the furniture that they could carry away. It was near Easter, and the bishop of Poitiers now declared that unless the abbess were released he would himself come with the townsfolk and rescue her; in the meantime the Easter festival should not be celebrated, and no baptisms should be performed. Clotild retorted by ordering that any one attempting to set the abbess free should instantly be cut down. Nevertheless, the Domestic, Flavianus, appearing on the scene, succeeded in getting Leubovera into safety. Clotild, now carried away and glorying in her power, connived at the worst excesses. Murders took place at the convent, at S. Radegund's tomb and before the *arca* of relics. She encouraged the violence done, looking down with scorn on Basina, who had begun to feel contrition and at the same time to resent her cousin's domineering ways; this less truculent princess went so far as to humble herself before the abbess and make her peace. Meanwhile, the scandalous riot in the city showing no decrease, the two kings, Guntram and Childebert, nominated a joint commission of bishops to hold an inquiry, one of whom was Gregory, but these bishops, remembering what had befallen their brethren, prudently declined to move until the riot had been controlled by the secular arm. Count Macco, deputed to this task, succeeded in quelling the disturbance, the people of Poitiers now taking vengeance on the gangs which had so long terrorized the city. Clotild now gave herself up. She came out of the oratory under the safeguard of that very Cross, the power of which she had until that moment scorned,[1] and haughtily claimed benefit of her royalty. The city now being restored to tranquillity, the bishops sat to hold their inquiry, and Clotild was brought before them. She at once made scandalous charges against the abbess. The bishops' report to the kings mentions other charges: there was insufficiency of food and clothing; it was declared that other persons than the nuns had used their bathroom; the abbess had not hesitated to entertain lay folk; the betrothal of her niece had taken place in the monastery; she had given this niece parts of a silk *palla* to which she had no right; she had played backgammon; she carried on an intrigue with a man.

---

[1] Radegund says that the rights granted by Lothar I to the convent were confirmed by all his four sons.

[2] X. 15: *adgregatis sibi, ut supra diximus, homicidis, maleficis, adulteris, fugitivis vel reliquorum criminum reis.*

[3] *Iussit eos ut inruentes nocte monasterium abbatissam foris extraherent.*

The abbess answered point by point; her defence as to entertainment, that it had been the practice in Radegund's time, is confirmed by several poems of Fortunatus. The bishops found Leubovera guilty of nothing more than indiscretion, and she was restored to her position; the offending nuns were deprived of communion. Clotild and Basina now had the effrontery to repeat before King Childebert the most outrageous of their accusations, adding, in the hope of infuriating the king, that the lovers of Leubovera were in the habit of regularly taking messages to his enemy, Queen Fredegund. None of the charges was substantiated (X. 17). In the end, the half-repentant Basina was sent back to the monastery,[1] the wholly impenitent Clotild, with serious crimes upon her head, was given an estate, and resumed a life of ease.[2] So profitable was it in Gaul of the sixth century to have royal blood in the veins.

---

[1] *Accepta cruce dominica, cuius prius virtutem despexerat, in obviam egreditur dicens: Nolite super me, quaeso, vim inferre quae sum regina, filia regis regisque alterius consobrina. . . .* As she seems to have withdrawn to the monastery, this was the cross of Radegund to which allusion has been made above.

The evidence at the trial goes to show that the nunnery was not rigorous in discipline, but hardly that it was a sink of iniquity. And to the impartial reader it would seem that such charges as were not false were exaggerated.[3] It would be unfair to assume that no austerity was practised. A nun of Poitiers who had seen a vision demanded permission of the abbess (Agnes) to become an anchoress. A cell was prepared, to which she was conducted by Radegund, accompanied by the sisters, carrying lamps and singing psalms. Before entering she kissed them all in farewell, the door through which she entered was walled up, and she was left alone to pass her days in prayer and reading.[4] When Radegund herself first became a nun she lived in the hardest way, starving herself, wearing a hair shirt, sleeping on ashes at night, cleaning the nuns' shoes, washing dishes, lighting fires, washing the feet of the sick, and performing every kind of menial office. She had a metal plate made in the form of a cross, which she heated and applied to her skin, also wearing iron bands and chains; she would burn herself with glowing coals, and brand herself with the sign of the cross.[1] She fed the poor and washed the feet of lepers, even embracing leprous women.

---

[1] Basina had almost escaped participation in the riot. In 584 her father Chilperic had thought of a Visigothic marriage for her, but Radegund, then in practical control, bade her refuse, saying: 'it is not meet that a girl dedicated to Christ should return to the pleasures of the world' (VI. 34).

[2] X. 20. The two were brought before an episcopal council at Metz. Childebert asked that both should be pardoned and received into communion.

[3] The sincere tone of affection in which Baudonivia, the contemporary nun, who was in the monastery in Radegund's time, speaks, in her Life, of the patroness and of the nuns' grief at her death, shows that the degeneration after the ex-queen's death must have been very rapid (Baudonivia, *Vita Sanctae Radegundis, Libri Duo*, in M. G. H., *Script. rer. Merov.*, ii (1888), pp. 364 ff.). Dill, who relates the whole story of the revolt, believed that discipline was ineffective even in Radegund's time, and that the abbes Agnes may have been in part responsible (*Roman Soc. in Gaul in the Merovingian Age*, pp. 383 ff.).

[4] VI. 21 (29). It is clear that a window was left in the cell.

It is stated on another page that Radegund's nunnery obeyed the Rule drawn up by Caesarius for his sister Caesaria at Arles (p. 368); it may be presumed that, as in the case of men's monasteries, before the general triumph of S. Benedict's Rule, that of Caesarius was the most widely adopted in the nunneries of Gaul. A foundress claimed the right to appoint the first abbess; after her death the superior was elected by the community, as was the priest who conducted the services in the church. Her second in command, and representative during her absence, was the *praeposita* (provost, prioress). Under these two were: the *primiceria*, or mistress of the school and of singing; the *formaria*, or mistress of the novices; the *thesauraria*, or treasurer. In addition to actual office-holders there was a group of senior nuns (*seniores*), who were regarded as models for the imitation of the younger in the matter of observance, and were taken into counsel by the abbess when important matters were discussed. All the more venial offences of the nuns were simply punished by admonition. Resort to violence on the part of a nun was met by resort to the rod, in accordance with Deut. xxv. 3; the most serious faults were punished by excommunication, first partial, then absolute, the incorrigible offender being expelled. We may suspect that these sanctions, sufficient when a good tone prevailed, were not sufficiently drastic to curb rebellious spirits.[2] We receive the impression that nunneries were particularly exposed to dangers both from without and from within. Their lawful protector, the bishop of the diocese, sometimes left them to their own devices. Maroveus, bishop of Poitiers, was for some reason unsympathetic towards Radegund; he would not ceremonially receive the relic of the Holy Cross sent her by the Emperor Justin; on the occasion of her death he was absent from Poitiers, and Gregory had to be sent for from Tours.[1] Cases of abduction suggest that these convents were not well guarded. The action of King Charibert in marrying a nun has been already mentioned. The lawless Eulalius, sometime count of Clermont, after his wife had left him on account of his dishonest and irregular life, carried off a girl, presumably a nun, from a monastery in the Lyonnais (X. 8). Bishop Felix of Nantes, objecting to the marriage of his niece with Pappolen, had craftily separated her from her husband, and compelled her to become a nun at Vaison. As soon as the bishop died, she sent a message to her husband, who took her out and remarried her, securing the king's sanction (VI. 9 (16)).

---

[1] Baudonivia, as above, Bk. I. 26. This nun only undertook to write such details about Radegund as Fortunatus (*vir apostolicus Fortunatus episcopus*) had not included in his Life, though some of her facts are very similar to those recorded by him. It would be difficult to guess from her book that any riot had ever occurred in the monastery. Her concluding words are: *fideli devotione et sedulitate debita veneramur in terris cuius anima confidimus*. Yet presumably she was in the nunnery through all the strange events recorded by Gregory in Bks. IX and X.

[2] For the above details, see Dom Leclercq, in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Cénobitisme', col. 3199.

Nuns wore a special habit; when Gregory speaks of the entry of a woman into the monastic state he uses the words *vestem mutare*; the Rule of Caesarius provided for a plain whitish tunic and *pallium*.[2] Baudonivia mentions that Radegund put on a religious habit when she became a nun. The Rule ordered that the hair must not be long, but an episode in the Poitiers riot shows that it was not always cut close.[3]

The description of a nun's death at Poitiers will recall many later accounts pronouncing the special activity of devils against the religious.[4] As she lay dying, she extended her hands, deprecating the help of a great saint in her humble cause. The nuns were wondering why such help was needed when a possessed man (*inergumenus*) then present, tearing his hair and dashing himself to the ground, bemoaned the removal 'of this soul from our power'. Further questioned, he added: 'Lo! the angel Michael hath taken the girl's soul and borne it away to heaven, and our Prince, whom ye call the Devil, hath no share therein.'

---

[1] His absence may have been a mere accident. But if Gregory could be brought from Tours, we should imagine that Maroveus might have attended if he had wished. Radegund's letter to the bishops shows that she had a sense of grievance with regard to the bishop's attitude.

[2] Migne, *Patr. Lat.* lxvii, p. 1118. Women vowed to virginity had worn some kind of habit in earlier centuries even when they did not dwell in monasteries. Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *De Vita Beati Martini*, ch. 22: *habitu virginitatis imposito*.

[3] The ruffians sent by Clotild to seize the abbess of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, laying hands upon the prioress Justina by mistake, dragged down her hair.

[4] VI. 21 (29); cf. Baudonivia, *Vit. S. Radegundis*, i. 19, where a nun sees *supra murum milia milium daemonum in specie caprarum adstare*, these demons being exorcized by Radegund. Cf. also cases noted by G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, Index, s.v. *Devils*.

c. Rules.

In the time of Gregory no single Rule had absolute predominance among the monasteries of Gaul. That of S. Caesarius of Arles was most generally followed, but much was derived from Cassian, Pachomius, Basil, and Antony.[1] The Rule of Caesarius was only abandoned for that of Benedict, and it was given up not without regret. The absence of an authoritative Rule was even more marked in Italy; when, early in the sixth century, Benedict set forth the Rule destined in time to displace all others in the West,[2] he deplored the irregular conditions then prevalent in his country. Caesarius and Benedict began to improve the state of affairs in their respective countries about the same time; in the south of Italy, at Squillace, Cassiodorus, who was acquainted with the system followed by the religious houses of Edessa and Nisibis, was moving in the same direction.[3] The Benedictine order entered Gaul from Italy in the worst days of the sixth century; S. Maur founded the abbey of Glanfeuil in Anjou about the year 543, about thirty years before Gregory became bishop of Tours; Fleury, on the Loire near Orleans, was founded before 550, when he was still a small boy. But diversity of usage was destined to continue for more than two hundred years. It was not until the council held in the first year of Pepin and Carloman, in 742, that the Rule of Benedict was commended to all the monasteries of Gaul; and more than seventy years later, in the reign of Louis the Pious, it was again necessary to insist that the diversity of observance in the monasteries should be reduced to one system.[1] In view of the slowness with which the Benedictine Rule advanced to its final victory we are not surprised to read that when Aredius (S. Yrieix) founded a monastery the Rule which he chose was still one based upon Cassian, Basil, and others. As already noted, Radegund tells us that when she established her nunnery at Poitiers she adopted the rule drawn up by Caesarius for her sister's nunnery at Arles (IX. 42).[2]

---

[1] This meant that Egyptian monasticism was the great exemplar for the West; Cassian spent seven years investigating conditions of monastic life in Egypt. Pachomius had ordered coenobitic life in Egypt as early as 315; his organization was developed by Basil about 360. The monasteries instituted by S. Martin in Gaul were not rigidly coenobitic, retaining the looser coherence of the half-eremitic oriental communities. Gregory says (VII. 1) that Salvius (d. 584) entered a monastery where he lived 'under the rule instituted by the Fathers', the latter word meaning the Gallican ascetics like S. Martin. Another Martin, abbot of Saujon, himself built his monastery 'after the precepts' of his great namesake; the words *post dogmata magistri* need not be confined to construction only (G. C. 56).

[2] For the Benedictine Rule see the edition of Dom Cuthbert Butler, published at Freiburg in 1912. In 1900 the Benedictines of Montecassino published a reproduction of MS. 914 of S. Gall.

[3] The especial insistence of Cassiodorus upon reading and copying manuscripts was due partly to his admiration for the learned Mesopotamian houses, partly to his own literary tastes; it may be noted that Caesarius also authorized monks to copy manuscripts. The Rule of the Bruttian monasteries did not spread in the same way as that of Benedict.

Unity of observance in Gallican monasticism was delayed by its penetration, even in Gregory's lifetime, by a new influence from the West. At the close of the sixth century Columban introduced the ascetic Irish system, which was obeyed in the houses founded by him in the Vosges.[3] But this mystical and austere order of life was not suited to the temperament either of Frank or Gallo-Roman ; and its very austerity furthered the progress of the more practical and human rule of S. Benedict. The great spread of monasticism at that time carried the Benedictine gospel of healthy work far and wide over a country then needing the lesson as much as any in the world. It may be regarded as fortunate for France that the spirit of the Italian rather than that of the Irish saint prevailed, and that holiness was associated with the workshop and the farm as well as with the oratory and the cell. In no small degree the Benedictines did for a country desolated by disorder what the European colonists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did for virgin lands in the Western continents.

---

[1] At the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 816. At this time the reforming spirit was S. Benedict of Aniane. The Rule of Caesarius for nuns will be found in Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, vol. lxvii, pp. 1105 ff.

[2] *Regulam sub qua sancta Caesaria deguit, quam sollicitudo beati Caesarii antistitis Arelatensis ex institutione sanctorum patrum convenienter collegit accivi.* Cf. Fortunatus, *Carm.* viii. 1 ; and Baudonivia's *Life* (cf. above, p. 67).

[3] Anegray, Luxeuil, and Fontaines : the Vosges at this period was held to include the plateau of Langres. It was as a result of Columban's influence that the Irish double monastery for separate communities of men and women under a single head, sometimes an abbess, appeared in France at Nivelles, Maubeuge, and Remiremont. The type was more common in England, and various examples are mentioned by Bede, of which St. Hilda's monastery at Whitby was one ; cf. G. Plummer, *Baedae opera hist.*, ii, p. 150. Columban's Rule (see Migne, lxxx, pp. 209 ff.) involved penitential discipline, fasting, and confession. It was imbued with ascetic traditions which Ireland had learned from Syria and the Thebaid. It had spiritual affinities with the life led in the solitary places of Auvergne and Cantal by anchorites, some of whom had actually been in the East, or were of oriental origin. Gaul boasted a stylite (Walfroy), and devotees, like Senoch and Lupicinus, whose practices recall those of Indian fakirs. References to works on Columban will be found in Dom Leclercq's article, 'Cénobitisme', in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, cols. 3210 ff.

d. Buildings.

When monasticism was a new thing in Gaul a local monastery meant little more than a group of cells, either natural caves, or small chambers cut in the rock, or small wooden huts ;[1] there was not necessarily any continuous building, but there might be a fence or wall enclosing the whole group, a church, and a refectory. Such seems to have been the form of the monasteries founded by S. Martin in the fourth century. We recognize the influence of eremitic Egypt ; the bond of coenobitic life was imperfectly formed ; its symbol, the monastic building, had not yet been created.

At Lérins, early in the fifth century, coenobitism began to prevail ; and from this time the erection of a complex of buildings must have become a necessity for all larger communities. Such monasteries as Lérins, and S. Victor at Marseilles, contained large numbers of monks, and were centres of religious education. These must have needed extensive quarters, designed by competent builders.[2]

We learn little from our author as to the general appearance or internal arrangement of contemporary religious houses. He does, however, make incidental allusions from which some information may be gleaned. Thus in describing the funeral of S. Radegund he tells us that the procession wound along outside and close below the walls of the monastery, from the towers and ‘ battlements ’ of which the mourning nuns looked down.[3] It was therefore an imposing building which had at least one interior court, where the satellites of the rebelling nuns lit a tar-barrel when they seized the furniture. The evidence at the trial of the nuns shows that it had a plastered bath-chamber for the use of the nuns (X. 15).

---

[1] Sometimes advantage would be taken of Roman ruins. S. Mesmin de Micy and S. Senoch established themselves in ruins ; so did Columban at Luxeuil. Dom Leclercq remarks that in stony districts monasteries might be rapidly improvised after the manner of that at Lindisfarne, as described by Bede (article, ‘ Gallicane, Église ’, col. 425, in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*).

[2] It may well be that building was represented among the kinds of manual work taught to monks, and that much of the construction and subsequent repairs was done by their own hands. In Italy, at any rate, this would seem to have been the case (cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ii. 11).

[3] G. C. 104 : *per fenestras turrium et ipsa quoque muri propugnacula.* We gather from another passage that the walls were high, for an escaping nun had to let herself down, and was drawn up again, by ropes (IX. 40). Monasteries were generally enclosed, if not with walls, as in the centre and south of Gaul, then with the improvised protection of fosse and palissade enjoined by S. Columban (Rule, Migne, *Patr. Lat.* lxxx, p. 219).

It is of course unsafe closely to compare with the monastic houses of Gregory's time a great establishment built nearly three hundred years later. But the plan for the Benedictine monastery of S. Gall on Lake Constance, prepared in the first half of the ninth century, may throw a certain light on the smaller and more primitive houses of Merovingian times, from which the chief features of later monasteries may have gradually developed.[1] For these early houses, if of any size, must have had at least the beginnings of cloister, refectory, dormitory, infirmary, and guest house grouped about the monastic church. Some accommodation for guests may be assumed, since bishops, and abbots, travelling from one part of the country to another must sometimes have been offered shelter, to say nothing of less important persons. Gregory was a frequent traveller; he must often have been a guest in monasteries as well as in church houses, and during such sojourns in various parts of Gaul may well have learned some of those stories of miracle which he has transferred to his pages.[2] It is to be regretted that, if this was the case, he should have omitted all reference to the buildings in which he was housed. We may imagine that he must often have entered the abbot's cell in S. Martin's at Tours which is mentioned in VII. 26 (29), Claudius, the murderer of Eberulf, taking refuge there. The abbot was at the moment in the cell, and was only rescued by two clerics just in time to avoid the succeeding murder. An attempt was made before the doors were opened to get in through the roof, while spears were thrown through the windows after the glass had been broken.[3] The passage at least tells us that the cell had glazed windows. Provision for baths must gradually have been made. Bathing had been discouraged among the oriental ascetics, who were regarded as models by so many of the early monks in Gaul;[1] baths had been denounced by S. Jerome. But the mention of the bathroom in the nunnery at Poitiers suggests that similar bathing chambers may have existed in men's monasteries. There was probably no rule about taking baths S. Benedict allowed the abbot to sanction their use by the healthy, but there was no monastic legislation on the subject until the close of the eighth century. Occasionally there may have been room set apart to serve as a *scriptorium*. S. Martin enjoined on the monks of Marmoutier to write, which probably meant copying the Scriptures and the Fathers; he did not encourage the practice of other arts.[2] There is some slight evidence of regular activity in transcription.[3] But it may be significant that in the frequent allusions to the occupations of Italian monks in the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory the Great there is only one mention of the copying of MSS., for Italy is not likely to have been more backward than Gaul at the time.[4]

---

[1] R. Willis, *Arch. Journal*, v, 1848, pp. 85 ff., with plan, an interesting article, based largely upon Goldast's *Alamannicarum rerum Scriptores aliquot Vetusti*, Frankfort, 1606; J. M. Clark, *The Abbey of St. Gall* (1926), pp. 71 ff.; Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, s.v. 'Gall (Saint-)', where references to earlier German and French works are given. The original plan of the monastery is in the town library.

The lower part of the gate-house of the monastery of Lorsch in the Rhineland, completed in 774, still stands, with its three arches below and three small windows above; the front is enriched with engaged columns below and flat pilasters above, connected with pointed 'arches', which form a decorative arcading (K. Schumacher, *Siedelungs- und Kulturgeschichte der Rheinlande*, iii (Mainz, 1925), pp. 253–5, and pl. 16).

[2] Ruinart, *Praefatio*, § 35.

[3] VII. 29: *Effractis cellulae vitreis, hastas per parietis fenestras injiciunt et Claudium iam semivivum ictu transfigunt. . . . Nonnulli matriculariorum et reli uorum pauperum . . . tectum cellulae conantur evertere.*

Probably gardens and orchards were regular adjuncts of the religious house. The monastery founded by S. Martius in Auvergne had a fine vegetable garden fenced by a quickset hedge, in connexion with which Gregory tells a pleasing tale. The saint, who was so kindly 'that he seemed armoured with his own sweet nature' (*ut putares eum lorica dulcedinis esse vallatum*), discovered one night that a robber was in the garden stealing the vegetables and fruit. At dawn he sent for the prior and said: 'A stray ox has got into the garden, but has done no harm; go and let him out.' The prior, with some monks, caught the thief, loaded him with his ill-gotten spoils and suffered him to go free. This little story is worthy of comparison with those of early Franciscan legend.[1] The orchard of the abbot Aredius (S. Yrieix) near Limoges, with its ripe apples hanging thickly, was too much for Fortunatus on a hot journey. He was tempted, and ate.[2]

---

[1] Taking baths was only recommended in case of illness. For monastic baths in the earliest times in the West see H. Dumaine, article, 'Bains', in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, cols. 90 ff.

[2] Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, ch. 10: *Ars ibi, exceptis scriptoribus, nulla habebatur*. In V. P. xx we read of the recluse Leobadius settling near Marmoutier, preparing vellum, and occasionally writing, to keep his mind free of evil thoughts.

[3] Caesarius of Arles included the copying of manuscripts among monastic labours.

[4] *Dial.* i. 4. The pope mentions getting in hay, gardening, gathering olives, tending vines, building (ii. 11), baking, &c., but not literary occupation.

In the case of monasteries for men, as in that of nunneries, information is casually dropped by Gregory when he is speaking of other matters ; he does not attempt formal description.

e. Services.

In the time of Cassian there was no uniformity in monastic church services ; he says that in his visits he found as many fashions as there were communities.[3] His own plan of services was chiefly based on the practice of the Egyptian monasteries, with modification suggested by that of Palestine. The hour of the night office (*Vigiliae, nocturnae solemnitates*) in some measure varied with the alteration in the hour of sunrise at the different seasons of the year.[4] The office usually consisted of twelve psalms, each followed by a prayer, and two lessons, one from the Old, the other from the New Testament. Vigils preceding feasts might last several hours. There were first three antiphons chanted by two choirs ; then a single monk chanted, while the others remained seated ; there were three lections, again from the Old and New Testament.[5]

---

[1] V. P. xiv. 2. We may compare the story in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (iii. 14), where thieves break into the garden of a monastery of which Isaac, a Syrian, was abbot. But in this case they received poetic justice, being forced by miraculous power to cultivate the garden all night long.

[2] *Carm.* vi. 9 :

Quod petit instigans avido gula nostra barathro
Excipiunt oculos aurea poma meos.
Vix digitis tetigi, fauce hausi, dente rotavi, &c.

[3] *De inst. Coenobiorum*, ii, ch. 2. Bks. II and III are chiefly concerned with services. For the general account on which the present summary is based see Dom Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'Cassien', cols. 2354–5. Cf. also Neale and Forbes, *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church*, 1858.

[4] The person responsible for giving notice of the hour was, therefore, expected to know something of the stars and the constellations visible in different months. Gregory's own work *De cursu Stellarum* (published in M. G. H., *Script. rerum Merov.*, vol. i) was written for such a person. The actual instruction how to use the constellations in determining the hours for night offices during the different months of the year begins with ch. 35. The Franks do not seem to have used clocks, though Theodoric the Ostrogoth had sent as a present to Gundobad, king of Burgundy, two clocks, one with a dial, another a water-clock, together with a clockmaker (Cassiodorus, *Var.* i, 45, 46).

[5] In Cassian's time it had not become usual to take one lesson from the Fathers, or from the Acts of martyrs.

The night office was almost immediately followed by Lauds, the service of the dawn. At this service, special psalms were recited ; Ps. cxviii, lxxxvii, lxii, having reference to daybreak, and Ps. cxlviii–cl. Lauds were thus as much a nocturnal as a day office ; they seem to represent the service called by Gregory *solemnitas matutina, matutina, matutinae*.[1] He does not appear to mention Prime, which was instituted at Bethlehem during the time of Cassian's residence there as a monk, and was held at 6 a.m.[2] It consisted of three psalms, i, lxxii, and lxxxix, with three prayers, which really meant pauses for meditation, closed by the recitation of a collect by the abbot.

Four more services took place during the day ; each consisting of three psalms, though these were not fixed psalms specially selected, like those used at Lauds. Tierce[3] was at 9 a.m., Sext at noon. Of None (at 3 p.m.) Gregory says nothing, and his allusions to Vespers are not very clear.[4]

S. Benedict ordered that the whole Psalter should be chanted (or said) during the week. The early Benedictines wished to fulfil the words of the 119th Psalm : ' In the midst of the night I will rise to give thanks unto Thee ; . . . seven times a day do I praise Thee.'[5] It has been estimated that in S. Benedict's time the services in the monastery church occupied four hours in all, a smaller total than that which afterwards prevailed. He instituted the complete course of canonical hours : the night office, Matins (including Lauds), Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. To Benedict, as to all monks from the early days of monasticism to the Middle Ages, psalmody was especially ' the Work of God '.[6] We have seen that in early monasteries, outside the Benedictine order, it occupied an equally important place. In accordance with S. Benedict's wish, a fresh beginning was made with the Psalter every Sunday at Matins. In these early times, the number of masses said each week probably did not exceed one a day; and it was, therefore, not necessary that the proportion of priest-monks should be a high one.[1]

---

[1] The term Matins was first applied to Lauds ; later Matins described the night office (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*, art. *Matins*).

[2] The object of the institution was to prevent monks sleeping too long after the Lauds were over. Sometimes Gregory seems to speak as if the *solemnitas matutina* was very near to *vigiliae* (V. S. M. iii. 23). In V. P. vi. he says of S. Gall : *psalmo quinquagesimo et benedictione decantata, et alleluiatico cum capitello expleto, consummavit matutinos*.

[3] In the last chapter of the History he says that Bishop Injuriosus instituted Tierce and Sext at Tours. In G. C. 96 he speaks of *cursus horae tertiae*.

[4] For Gregory's allusions to the office see Leclercq, in Cabrol, art. *Bréviaire*, col. 1301.

[5] For the probable *horarium* of Benedict's time cf. G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 213, and Abbot Butler, *Benedictine Monachism* (1919), ch. 17. For church services in the sixth century see p. 335.

[6] Abbot Butler, as above, p. 29, cited by Coulton, as above, pp. 26, 96. At Agaune, a *Laus perennis* or unceasing psalmody was carried out by relays

f. Asceticism.

The Gallic temperament preferred coenobitic life to the oriental type of ascetic monachism, in which men might live in cells apart from each other, only meeting at times for common worship; still more was it averse from the eremite's hard existence.[2] Asceticism had no great success in Gaul, for neither Gallo-Roman nor Frank was inclined to great abstinence,[3] and those who, like S. Martin, practised it, even at the time of its great vogue in the third quarter of the fourth century, were apt to incur dislike as persons open to the charge of affectation and vainglory.[4] In 383 the usurper Maximus gave heed to those bishops who were hostile to the ascetic movement, and his violent measures checked it both in Gaul and Spain.[5] There were always here and there anchorites who commanded respect,

---

of nine choirs after 522, in expiation for the murder of Sigiric, mentioned in the History (III. 5); this *Laus perennis* was an exception in the West (cf. article, 'Agaune', in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, cols. 858–9); the idea was of oriental origin and it was regularly practised by certain communities in Constantinople.

[1] The great increase of priests in medieval monasteries was due to the multiplication of masses for the souls of the rich departed. S. Benedict only contemplated two masses a week, and early Benedictine records show that there were few priests among the monks (Coulton, as above, p. 213). But cf. Ruinart's *Praefatio* to his edition of the History, § 35.

[2] The oriental and predominantly Egyptian character of much early monasticism in Gaul was due to the relations of Gaul with Egypt and the East. Many of the early monks in Gaul were themselves orientals like Abraham (II. 21; V. P. iii), who was a Syrian, while the father of Gallican monasticism, John Cassian, had himself passed twelve years in Egypt at the close of the fourth century. For ascetics in Gaul see also A. Marignan, as above, i, pp. 214 ff.

[3] The fact is frankly stated by the monk Gallus in the first *Dialogue* of Sulpicius Severus. It was recognized with equal candour by French monks in the later Middle Ages.

[4] S. Hilary of Arles makes an oblique allusion to Martin in this sense, in a passage eulogizing Honoratus (*Vita Honorati*, viii. 37; Migne, P. L. l, col. 1268). Victricius, the ascetic bishop of Rouen, a zealous founder of monasteries in the region of Boulogne and Thérouanne, was accused of heresy and obliged to justify himself at Rome.

[5] H. Leclercq in Cabrol, *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, article, 'France', col. 384.

but the desire to imitate their methods was slight. Gregory gives an instance which illustrates the conviction, felt by many excellent men, that the adoption of rigid asceticism might have its dangers for the ascetic. There was a monk who, not content with the prayer and reading imposed by the Rule, would go out after service and offer penitential prayers in a solitary place. When this was brought to the abbot's notice, he rebuked the monk for vainglory, in that he separated himself from the brethren to pray alone.[1] The abbot Maxentius was living as a recluse in his monastery in Poitou at the time of Clovis's great advance against the Goths, and by working a miracle saved the house from harm (II. 27 (37)). S. Lupicinus practised such austerities as to rival in endurance the oriental fakir.[2] He inhabited a cell in some ruins before the small window of which hung a curtain that he might not be seen against his will. Round his neck he wore a stone so heavy that two men could hardly lift it. At night, yet further to enhance his hardship by preventing himself from falling asleep, he fixed two sharp points in one end of his stick, which he placed under his chin as he sat (*quos ad mentum suum, ne somnum caperet, supponebat*). Naturally a saint capable of such endurance became celebrated, and was regarded as a puissant healer.[3] His death was followed by a scramble for all possible material relics, while there was a formal struggle between two districts for the possession of his dead body.[4] The successful competitor was a resolute lady (*matrona*) from Trezelle (Allier), who in his lifetime had sent the saint food ; she was able to bring up reinforcements, and so carried off the body in defiance of the local people. The defeated side finally joined the triumphal procession of her partisans, and she brought the saint to her own church, with processional crosses, lit tapers, and incense, passing choirs disposed at different points along the way with crosses, tapers, and incense.[1] The recluse Hospicius of Nice is described in the History as wearing chains next his skin and a hair shirt over them.[2] His diet consisted of dry bread and a few dates; in Lent he had nothing but the roots eaten by the hermits of the Thebaid. A small monastery was near the solitary tower in which he lived. When, in accordance with his own prophecy, the Lombards invaded Gaul, they surrounded the tower, which, however, they were unable to enter by the ordinary means of access, the hermit looking down on them from his window. At last two men got upon the roof through which they entered, astonished to see a man in chains, who, through a summoned interpreter, declared himself an incorrigible criminal and homicide. A Lombard swung his sword to kill him, when lo! his arm stiffened and could not be moved: the rest of the adventure must be read in the text. In the same place it is related that the saint healed a deaf-mute of fever,[3] a man blind from birth, a woman possessed of three devils, and a girl vexed by an unclean spirit.

---

[1] G. C. 37. This, though he himself had followed the monk and observed flames to issue from his mouth forming a great light (*pharum magnum*) above his head. Gregory says that this is a mystery which his poor wits cannot understand (*tenebrae sensus mei intelligere non queunt*). He cites Moses and the burning bush, also recalling the miraculous light said to have issued from S. Martin's head (Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* ii. 2), and that which Brachio declared to have risen from his relics (V. P. xii. 3).

[2] V. P. xiii. 1. Yet it is stated that even this rigorous ascetic had a servant (*minister*).

[3] He cured many fever-stricken persons (*frigoritici*) by touch, and by making the sign of the cross.

[4] Dried blood was scraped from the walls of his cell ; his garments were torn asunder (*fimbrias vestimenti diripiunt*).

S. Martius began his monastic career by cutting himself a rock-cell near Clermont, hewing out in like manner a bed 'on which were neither feather-pillows nor rugs nor coverlets'[4] Here he developed a power which enabled him to cure fevers and other illness, and drive out devils by the sign of the cross. But later a small community gathered round him, for which he established an ordered coenobitic life. Caluppa,[5] as a monk in a monastery of Auvergne, was reviled by his fellows, because his extreme austerities prevented him from doing his share of work. He was rebuked by the prior and obliged to leave the brotherhood, withdrawing to an isolated rock, where he lived as a hermit.[1] He did not break off all communication with the monastery, from which a servant was sent to him.[2] S. Salvius, after becoming abbot of his monastery, shut himself up as a recluse; the story of his reputed death, celestial vision, and restoration to life, was heard by Gregory from his own lips.[3] A certain Julian, a vegetarian and abstainer from wine, stood continually in an upright position, never seating himself or lying down.[4] A recluse named Eparchius was famed as *vir magnificae sanctitatis.* A native of Périgueux, he built a cell at Angoulême, and gathered monks about him.[5] The people crowded to him with gifts, through which he was able to relieve the poor. He was a man of engaging manners, who could request rather than beseech a judge to pardon the offender.[6] Judges were unable to resist him, but sometimes the people in their own defence insisted on the execution of severe sentences against violent criminals,[7] whom Eparchius loved to leave at large. He lived as a recluse for forty-four years. Winnoch, a Breton ascetic, who passed through Tours on his way to Jerusalem, wore no clothing but sheepskins, and lived in extreme abstinence. Gregory was so desirous of retaining in his diocese a man of such holiness that he ordained him priest (V. 14 (21)). Ascetics used the hair shirt to mortify the flesh. The recluse Patroclus of Berry, who lived in the greatest abstinence, wore one next his skin,[8] as did even S. Radegund, who was brought up in kings' houses.

---

[1] *Dispositis in itinere psallentium turmis, cum crucibus cereisque atque odore flagrantis thumiamatis.*

[2] VI. 6: *qui constrictus catenis ad purum corpus ferreis, induto desuper cilicio, nihil aliud quam purum panem cum dactylis comedebat. In diebus autem quadragensimae de radicibus herbarum quas heremitae utuntur, exhibentibus sibi negotiatoribus, alebatur.*

[3] *Ibid.* This man was being taken to Rome by a deacon of the diocese of Angers, where he lived, that he might be healed at the tombs of SS. Peter and Paul. But Hospicius, by his miraculous power, himself effected the cure, so that the visit to Rome became unnecessary, and the deacon cried: *Quaerebam Petrum, quaerebam Paulum Laurentiumque vel reliquos qui Romam proprio cruore inlustrant; hic omnes repperi, hic cunctos inveni.* Gregory says that he learned of all the miracles which he recounts from the lips of this healed man.

[4] V. P. xiv. 1: *plumellae, stragula aut tapetes.*

[5] Caluppa, like two other hermits, Senoch and Patroclus, of whom Gregory writes elsewhere (V. P. xv, ix), is mentioned in the History (V. 7, 9, 10).

Even the young were seized with the desire to practise the ascetic life. A boy of twelve at Bordeaux was walled up in a narrow cell in the corner of a vaulted crypt where there was only just standing-room for one person. Here he remained for about eight years, at the end of which time fear seized him, and he was let out, crying wildly that he was burned by the saints, and principally by S. Martin.[1]

---

[1] V. P. xi. 1: *unde, ut mos est monachorum, magnum ei improperium inferebant, dicente sibi praesertim praeposito: 'qui non deliberat laborare, indigne postulat manducare.'*

[2] *Puer, qui ei minister fuerat datus.*

[3] VII. 1. Salvius was afterwards bishop of Albi.

[4] IV. *32*. He was carried off by the plague in 571.

[5] VI. *8*. Eparchius was famous as an exorcist and healer.

[6] *Ibid.*: *Iudicibus plerumque ut culpabilibus ignoscerent dulcedine profusa imperavit potius quam rogavit.*

[7] *Libenter te, inquit, audio, sancte sacerdos; sed, insurgente vulgo, aliud facere non potui, timens super me seditionem moveri,* said a count, who was thereupon shown alive a criminal supposed to have been hanged until dead. Gregory says that he heard this from the count himself.

[8] V. 10: *Cilicium semper puro adhibens corpori.* The word *cilicium* may perhaps in some cases signify no more than a garment of very coarse texture.

It was but natural that the supreme type of hermit ascetic, the stylite, should find imitators among the ambitious. The exploits of the greatest among stylites were known all over the Christian world. The celebrated Simeon is twice mentioned by Gregory, and one passage would almost lead the reader to suppose that the column stood in a church.[2] Perhaps the only successful stylite in Gaul was Wulfolaic (S. Walfroy), who in the neighbourhood of Trèves succeeded, despite the rigours of the climate, in standing on a column for a long time until at last prevented by local bishops (VIII. 15).

The mention of attendants deputed to minister to the wants of certain anchorites shows that the extreme rigours of self-discipline were not always practised. In some cases we discover recluses who tended their persons and enjoyed the simple pleasures of country life. S. Leobardus did not care to become hirsute, like S. Martin himself,[3] but cut his hair and beard at intervals ;[4] he was attended by a servant.[5] A pleasant picture is that of the hermit S. Eusicius, of Selles-sur-Cher, who lived remote in a wilderness of thorns, but had ' clerics ' about him.[6] They kept bees, and the saint cured sickness. One day a man who had been healed returned and meanly stole two hives, but the saint forgave him. Eusicius abhorred the riches of this world, and when Childebert on his way to Spain (III. 10) paid him a visit, offering a present of fifty gold pieces, he was bidden give the money to the poor. A sixth-century Breton saint named John had planted a garden by his cell at Chinon, where he used to sit reading and writing in the shade of the trees.[1]

---

[1] VIII. 34. This was the usual complaint of the energumens or ' possessed ', who, in the person of the devil within them, would often cry aloud that such and such a saint was burning them.

[2] G. C. 26. The explanation probably is that at Kal'at Sim'an there were four basilican churches at right angles to each other and so close that their converging ends formed an open octagonal space in which Simeon's column stood. Though exposed to the air he might thus almost be said to be in the complex of churches. Gregory lays stress on the extreme misogyny of Simeon, and tells how one woman who sought to obtain a blessing by coming into his presence disguised in male dress fell dead as she sought to enter ' the basilica of the column ' (*ingredi in basilicam columnae*).

[3] Severus, *Vita S. Mart.*, ch. 9.

[4] V. P. xx.

[5] *Ibid.* : *advocat ministrum suum et ait : praepara quiddam cibi quod accipiam.*

[6] G. C. 87.

The obsession of Gaulish eremites by devils was as continual as that which tormented the minds of their predecessors in the Thebaid, or their successors in the religious houses of the Middle Ages.[2] S. Venantius was haunted by demons. Once his door was besieged by two in the form of rams. Another time, coming back from his oratory, he found his cell full of devils (*plenam daemoniis*).[3] The recluse Caluppa was harried by demons in the form of snakes and monsters. Once he encountered two dragons 'one of which, I ween, was none other than the Prince of Temptation';[4] all these he overcame by the sign of the cross. To vanquish the recluse Secundellus, in his island retreat, the Devil even assumed the form of Christ.[5] Such experiences were not, of course, confined to monks. Eparchius, bishop of Clermont before Sidonius, entering the cathedral at night, found it 'full of devils' and the prince of devils in the guise of a woman in ornate apparel seated in the episcopal chair. The bishop rebuked him, but with a threat of carnal temptation he vanished like smoke (*sicut fumus evanuit*) (II. 21). S. Nicetius, like later saintly persons in the Middle Ages was harassed by the personal attention of the Evil One, who seems to have appeared to him with eyes like those of a savage bull.[6]

---

[1] G. C. 23: *viridariolum, quem manu propria excolebat; arbores lauri plantaverat.* In Gregory's time the trees had grown large and there was a *custos loci* to look after the garden and tomb.

[2] Cf. G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, Index, s.v. *Devils.*

[3] V. P. xvi. 3.

[4] *Ibid.* xi. 1: *quorum unus, ut arbitror, ipse dux temptationis.*

[5] *Ibid.* x. 2.

[6] There rose before him: *umbra teterrima, statu procera, crassitudine valida . . . oculorum scintillantium immensitatem in modum tauri petulantis habebat* (V. P. xvii. 3). Nothing is said, however, of horns.

IV

MEROVINGIAN LIFE

I

THE SOCIAL ORDER

a. The Free.

MEROVINGIAN society[1] was stratified, but not so rigidly as in the later days of imperial power. Under the Empire a man born in one stratum had no chance of rising to another. Under the Franks, though in the main recognized divisions were kept apart, the individual might improve his position if he found favour with the great or could amass a certain amount of money. A man of servile origin might become a count; Leudast, count of Tours, is one example (85).

At the head of all free persons came the members of the house of Merovech, to which by degrees a position of supremacy had fallen;[2] the members of the royal house were free from all disabilities; in their case freedom was excessive and defeated its own ends. From their youth up they enjoyed a licence practically without limit. The king was absolute; the long-haired princes[3] and their sisters were all styled kings and queens; their youth was uncontrolled[1] and nearly uninstructed, so that when they reached maturity they were at once the slaves of all the dangerous passions. Every temptation lay in their path; only the happy birthright of a finer nature, or the unusual care of some virtuous guardian, saved them from greed, lust, cruelty and all the corrupting forms of self-indulgence. A boy, succeeding to the throne as a minor, was given a guardian (*nutritor*); but this was commonly a notable of the kingdom, who must have left the details of supervision to women, or to lower officials of the court. Few of the kings could read or write, fewer still were taught in any way to curb their desires. Thus, on one side or another, there was always weakness: if, by exception, the wickedest among them (Chilperic) had the widest intellectual interests, the best (Guntram) shared the ungovernable temper of the worst and, though he disliked crimes, committed them.[2] By the fatal sequence of cause and effect the upbringing of the Merovingian courts was such as almost to ensure the making of bad kings. The female members of the royal houses, generally longer under the influence of their spiritual directors, might rise on an average above the male in morality if not in intellect, provided that their instructors were men of strength, character, and wisdom. But even among the queens and the princesses indulgence and lack of restraint produced contemptible and sometimes vile women, slothful, lascivious, and vindictive. There are fine exceptions; a Radegund or an Ingoberg (IX. 26) shed a needed lustre upon their age; but if these passed their days in good works, sought the welfare of the sick and poor, and founded religious houses, their kinswomen had no care for virtue, and would have a doctor put to death for failing to effect a cure

---

[1] B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'abbé Irminon*, i (Prolegomena), Paris, 1844; the same, 'Explication du capitulaire de Villis,' in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, 1853; Fustel de Coulanges, *Hist. des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, iv: *L'alleu et le domaine rural pendant l'époque mérovingienne*, Paris, 1889; the same, *Les origines du système féodal: Le bénéfice et le patronat pendant l'époque mérovingienne*, 1890; P. Roth, *Geschichte des Beneficialwesens*, and *Feudalität und Unterthanenverband*, 1863; E. Beaudouin, 'Études sur les origines du régime féodal: La recommendation et la justice seigneuriale,' in *Annales de l'enseignement supérieur de Grenoble*, 1889; P. Guilhiermoz, *Essai sur l'origine de la noblesse en la France au moyen âge*, Paris, 1902; A. Prost, 'La justice privée et l'immunité' in *Mém. de la Soc. des antiquaires de France*, xlvii, 1886; M. Kroell, *L'immunité franque*, Paris, 1910; H. Brunner, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des deutschen und französischen Rechts*. For valuable summaries cf. C. Pfister, in Lavisse, *Hist. ill. de la France*, II. i., and M. Prou, *La Gaule mérovingienne*, ch. vi.

[2] Among the old German tribes a few families had come to be regarded as more noble than the rest; when one of them obtained a superiority over the others the way lay open for their elimination by methods like those adopted by Clovis.

[3] The significance of the long locks as a sign of royal birth is illustrated by the stories of Chararic and his son (II. 30 (41)), and of the sons of Charibert, whom their murderous uncles determined either to crop or slay, sending their envoy to Queen Clotild with symbolic sword and scissors (III. 18). Other instances are those of Gundovald, whose head was twice shorn (VI. 16 (24)); and Chlodovech, the murdered son of Chilperic (VIII. 10: *a caesarie prolixa*

---

cognovi Chlodovechum esse). Whether the long hair of the Breton chieftains was a mark of royalty or merely a national fashion we cannot say with certainty; in IV. 14 Macliav, who turned monk to escape Chanao, broke his vows on the latter's death, let his hair grow (*demissis capillis*), and, rejoining his wife, assumed the chieftainship.

[1] The story of a minor palace-plot at the court of Childebert II, directed against the Queen-Mother Brunhild and the Queen Faileuba (X. 38), shows us the kind of people by whom royal children were surrounded.

[2] We recall Theuderic, who, though not the worst of his line, posted assassins in his quarters to kill his brother, afterwards behaving with contemptible meanness about a piece of silver plate; later he laid himself under strong suspicion of having pushed the ex-king of Thuringia over the walls of Zülpich because he wished this prince out of his way (pp. 47, 101).

(V. 27 (35)), or attempt the ruin of a nunnery because they disliked the abbess (IX. 39; X. 15).[1] Everywhere the rod was spared and the children spoiled; the kings and queens, the princes and princesses, were spoiled children with the vices of adults; and they were set above the laws. Now and then, even after ease and luxury had sown corruption, the hereditary force of a virile race produced a masterful ruler like Theudebert, or one of respectable efficiency like his cousin Sigibert; here and there a tendency to decent conduct was confirmed by good communications, as in the case of Guntram. But it is plain that the royal houses, if left alone, could end only in fratricidal strife, while if they were controlled by the one force able to defeat them, a rebellious aristocracy, they could only decline into guarded and fenced degenerates. The second alternative befell; and the line whose fortunes in the sixth century are described by Gregory, died out in the seventh in the palaces of the nerveless *fainéant* kings.[2] Precocious youths, encouraged by every circumstance to debauchery, became the fathers of children more degenerate than themselves. In short, the royal house which had begun in a state of unrivalled freedom brought itself down by excess of licence to a condition of practical slavery.

Below the kings came the greater subjects represented by the landed proprietors, who enjoyed full freedom: liberty, property, and jurisdiction.[3] The settlement of the Franks as owners of great estates in Gaul changed the fighting leaders of the Franks into a landed aristocracy which soon equalled or surpassed in position the old aristocratic class of Gallo-Roman proprietors, a class still commanding respect after the conquest by virtue of its higher civilization. Both Franks and Gallo-Romans were described under the same titles of honour;[1] thus a landed aristocracy grew up common to Franks and Gallo-Romans. A custom tending ultimately to create a nobility[2] was that of recommendation, by which individuals placed themselves in a relation to a powerful person or to the king somewhat recalling that of client to patron in Roman times. This was done in order to obtain the protection (*patrocinium, mundium, mundeburdis*) of the great man. Such clients became his *leudes* ('people', *Leute*),[3] linked to him by a tie such as bound far greater numbers to the king, the oath of loyalty establishing a definite personal relation between the parties. The king's *antrustiones* were sworn by a special oath as bodyguards and companions, chosen by him from the general number of the *leudes*; they enjoyed a certain prestige and formed a group with privileges resembling those of an aristocracy, especially as their relation to the king tended in course of time to become hereditary.[4] But although many of them occupied important positions such as those of duke and count, others merely held land of the king, for the grant of benefices was a common way of adding to their number; others again were men of no great wealth or standing; minors, sent to court to be brought up, like the pages of later times, might become *antrustiones*. In general, membership of the body was a mark of social distinction. By increasing the number of his close adherents in different parts of his kingdom the king extended his influence and power, and it was natural that he should include in their number as many magnates as he could bind to himself by the strongest of all possible bonds. He extended it still farther by granting immunities and other privileges. But it has been noted on an earlier page that, despite all such efforts, political power gradually fell into the hands of the landed aristocracy, who early in the seventh century won the upper hand in its struggle with the Crown (pp. 192 ff.). This, added to the privileges and immunities which they enjoyed, and their jurisdiction over their dependents, made of the great landowners a power dangerous to all liberty but their own; it demoralized all but those of strong character and principle in a class uneducated and unbridled, and such men were exceptions. The effect of freedom from all restraint is but too well exemplified by the actions of those among their number whose names are conspicuous in the History. The worst of all are Duke Rauching, who tortured his serfs while he sat at table, and even buried two of them alive because they decided to marry without his consent (V. 3); the matricide Eulalius (X. 8); the drunken ravisher Amalo, who, like Holofernes, found his Judith (IX. 27); the highwaymen sons of Waddo, ex-count of Saintes (VII. 29 (28)); the murderous 'chief families' of Tours who pursued a bloody vendetta within the walls of the church (VII. 46 (47));[1] all these illustrate the evil following the abuse of a privileged freedom. The men of nature sufficiently noble to rise above the temptations of their state are few in the chapters of the History. Chief among them is Duke Chrodin, or Chrodinus, a philanthropist given to charity and good works (VI. 13 (20)).[2] Conspicuous among women of high estate who lived good lives were the Queens Radegund and Ingoberg, already mentioned.[3]

---

[1] The new queen of Sigismund of Burgundy incited her husband to the murder of her stepson for expressing his not unnatural distaste for something which she did (III. 5).

[2] The badness of the Merovingian kings is perhaps sufficiently illustrated by the outlines of the lives of Kings Clovis, Theuderic, Lothar I, and Chilperic, given above (pp. 45–9, 62); that of the queens and princesses by the lives of Fredegund, Austrechild, Clotild the princess-nun, and Rigunth. Among the better characters we must mention, in addition to Guntram and Sigibert, Theudebert, whose generosity to the city of Verdun deserves notice (III. 34). Gregory (III. 31) has a fantastic story of Amalasuntha, daughter of the great Theodoric and niece of Clovis, which, if true, would suggest that ruthlessness and immorality were not confined to Frankish princesses: she is declared to have run off with a slave, and after her capture to have put poison in the chalice from which her mother drank. The fact that she was an Arian may have given rise to a completely false legend, which Gregory was only too ready to accept. See note on III. 31.

[3] B. Guérard, as above, p. 212.

---

[1] *Proceres, potentes, priores, meliores*, &c. The difference between Franks and Gallo-Romans tended to disappear when the latter were admitted to military service. Both classes were Christians, and community of faith formed a bond of union.

[2] A real hereditary nobility was not, however, formed until later than the sixth century; it did not exist in the fifth. Cf. Fustel de Coulanges, as above, iii, pp. 76 ff.

[3] Cf. IX. (20), Pact of Andelot: *leudes illi qui domnum Guntchramnum post transitum domni Chlotharii sacramenta primitus prebuerunt, et seqq.* Gregory does not often mention *leudes*, and when he does he appears to imply persons of importance such as *antrustions*. In II. (42), Clovis presents baldrics and armlets of spurious gold to the *leudes* of Ragnachar. In VIII. 9, Guntram suspects that the father of Queen Fredegund's child may be not his deceased brother Chilperic, but one of his own *leudes*. Marculf has preserved for us the *formula* for the reception of an *antrustio* (*Form.* i, ch. 18), in which the following words occur: *et quia ille fidelis Deo propitio noster ibi veniens in palatio nostro una cum sua in manu nostra trustem et fidelitatem nobis visus est coniurasse.* For *antrustions* cf. M. Deloche, *La trustis et l'antrustionat royal*, &c., Paris 1873.

[4] It also tended in the direction of feudalism, as the link in certain cases became one of estate to estate, in place of a link between man and man (cf. Pfister, as above, p. 200).

Below the really free, represented by the larger landed proprietors, came lesser freemen down to the *coloni* (p. 390), who had liberty and property but exercised no jurisdiction. A large number lived on the royal domains, and on the lands of the Church, or of the monasteries; those on Church lands were under the jurisdiction of bishops and abbots, but unless the bishop could claim special immunity for them, as in the case of Tours, they were subject to service in the army.[1] The conditions of the age were unfavourable to the freeman of small estate. When a man did not feel strong enough to maintain himself in the enjoyment of his freedom and his property, he had recourse to some powerful lord, and placed himself under his patronage. He handed over his property to the lord, but was allowed to occupy it and to preserve the succession for his descendants by paying a fixed annual rent. If the lord was a good man his tenant gained protection and peace; but as many great proprietors were bad, the surrender of freeholds often brought but slight advantage. Other small freemen, including enfranchised serfs of certain classes, were the *tributarii* or *censuales* under the protection of churches and abbeys, to which they owed certain services and payments. This numerous class had only a conditional liberty.[2] In addition must be mentioned men of free birth who, driven by poverty, recommended themselves to the rich, to whom they gave personal service for a subsistence.

---

[1] A similar feud at Tournai was quelled by Fredegund (X. 27) in the way which violent men best understand: *bipenni compescuit.*

[2] *Vir magnificae bonitatis et pietatis, aelymosinarius valde, pauperumque refector, profluus ditator ecclesiarum.* Fortunatus mentions two similar personages, the Austrasian magnates Lupus and Dynamius. He also praises two noble ladies, Theudechild and Vilithuta (*Carm.* iv. 25, 26).

[3] The character of Clotild, queen of Clovis, is marred by her barbaric spirit

The minor freemen were numerous; but, as Guérard has remarked, the question whether they were an increasing or a decreasing class depends upon our definition of freedom. If we mean complete independence, then they were a rapidly diminishing element in the population; if, on the other hand, we include men of all conditions above servitude, they represent an increasing element.[3] In any case, the minor freemen were a highly important class, since they formed the backbone of the Merovingian armies.

Ecclesiastics and monks were free. The bishops were in many ways the freest of the free. The authority of the popes

---

of revenge, which led her to incite her sons to a war of extermination in Burgundy.

[1] B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon*, i (Prolegomena), p. 216. Serfs, who on manumission were given a small amount of land, became proprietors, and passed into this class of freemen.

[2] It included the *chartularii* and *tabularii* mentioned below.

[3] Guérard, as above, p. 224. For the small freemen cf. also A. Marignan, as above, i, pp. 113 ff.

not extending at this time into Gaul, and that of the metropolitans being very slight (pp. 268 ff.), the average bishop was an autocrat in his diocese, and he enjoyed a large financial independence. The result was that too much depended upon his personal character; if he was a good man and a good administrator the condition of all those subordinated to him was better than that of men subject to secular lordship; if he was bad in character and weak in government, unprincipled subordinates were able to work great mischief. The bishops enjoyed more personal security than any other class. The kings, who would without scruple kill rebellious magnates, were generally afraid to kill, though they might ill-use, the bishops;[1] Chilperic maltreated Praetextatus of Rouen, and Guntram Theodore of Marseilles; it was left for a queen, Fredegund, to compass the death of the former. The private lives of bishops were controlled only by the laws of the Church, and these, in the case of an unscrupulous man, could be disobeyed with too much impunity.[2] The extreme case is that of the 'fighting bishops' of Gap and Embrun, Salonius and Sagittarius, whose freedom passed all bounds of decency. The priests and clergy, as noted on another page, were not tried in the secular courts, and therefore enjoyed more liberty than laymen. As far as the State was concerned, they were free from interference unless they committed criminal acts.

---

[1] Bishop Theodore was kidnapped, set on a jade (*miserabilem caballum*) and brought before the king, by whom he was later imprisoned with Bishop Epiphanius, who died of hardship (VI. 16 (24)). Childebert II also treated Theodore ill (VIII. 12). Bishops who meddled with politics might be roughly used (VIII. 28 (27)).

[2] The private life of the conscientious bishop was austere, and often comfortless. He lived in the 'church house' (p. 343) with priests and other clerics for his companions and attendants. If he had been married before his consecration he had to put away his wife, or treat her as a sister; in the latter case she was perhaps accommodated in an adjoining house; a canon of the Council of Tours in 567 runs as follows: *Episcopus coniugem ut sororem habeat et ita sancta conversatione gubernet domum omnem, tam ecclesiasticam quam propriam, ut nulla de eo suspicio quaque ratione consurget* (p. 282, n. 1). No one might become a bishop who had married a widow. No bishop might receive a visit from a woman except in the presence of two priests or deacons. His bedroom was shared by clergy in order that he might be protected from all suspicion, though the precaution did not always secure him from slander, as is shown by the case of Aetherius, bishop of Lisieux (VI. *36*). Sometimes an excluded wife was refractory, e.g. Susanna, wife of Priscus, bishop of Lyons (IV. *36*), and the wife of Felix, bishop of Nantes (G. C. *77*). Simplicius, bishop of Autun in the fifth century, following the example of Paulinus of Nola, continued to live with his wife under the conditions prescribed by the Church, but only escaped calumny by a miracle (G. C. *75*). The bishop might enjoy a change of surroundings by moving about his diocese, staying on the *villae* belonging to the Church, or in monasteries. Gregory himself may have had quarters not only in the church house of the cathedral at Tours, but at the monastery of S. Martin adjoining the famous church of the saint outside the walls (cf. IX. 6). A bishop might also go into retreat in some retired spot (VIII. 43).

b. The Unfree.[1]

Those who were without political rights and deprived in various degrees of economic freedom formed the large majority of the population. At their head was the class of *coloni*, nominally free, and forming the link between the free men and all those in a servile status ; next came the *lidi*, or *liti*, corresponding generally to the Roman *liberti*, or freedmen, an ever-increasing class, in time forming the mass of those in a dependent status, and thus of the inhabitants of Merovingian Gaul as a whole ; at the bottom of the scale were the slaves, whose numbers tended to decline ; though still extensive in the sixth century, they were already being reduced by absorption into the great class of serfs ;[2] had it not been for the fact that they were constantly recruited by prisoners of war, by criminals, and by slaves imported from other countries, the steady process of enfranchisement from complete slavery into the qualified bondage of serfdom would early have made them a relatively insignificant group. The Gaul of Gregory's time was a country without insensible and regular graduation between the groups forming the people. At the top was an aristocracy of large landed proprietors and officials ; below these was a small middle class of lesser officials, professional men, and traders, some of whom were themselves of servile descent and not in enjoyment of absolute freedom ; then came the vast mass of the bondfolk with the stratum of slaves at the bottom. Side by side with the lay organization was that of the Church, which had its aristocracy of bishops, and its own serfs and slaves, but in its clergy and monks a proportionately large class of free men. We may now briefly state the position of the chief groups among the unfree.

---

[1] See Fustel de Coulanges, *Hist. des inst. politiques*, iv, *L'alleu et le domaine rural*, pp. 273 ff.

[2] The class of serfs or bondfolk remained the greatest single group throughout the Middle Ages ; in Chaucer's England it formed half the population (G. G. Coulton, *The Mediaeval Village*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 5, a book of great interest for those who would compare rural conditions in Merovingian times with those of the later Middle Ages).

The *coloni* (p. 390) who were *ingenui*, and persons before the law, enjoyed but a qualified freedom.[1] They held land from which they could not be ejected, but which, on the other hand, they might not leave;[2] they were thus *adscripti glebae*; and even though they were left unharassed when they had paid certain dues and performed certain corvées, the *adscriptio* was in itself enough to deprive them of real freedom. 'Le colon,' says Sée, 'c'est déjà le serf du moyen âge.' As early as the close of the fourth century it was no longer admissible for a free man to marry the daughter of a *colonus*;[3] by the sixth century the *colonus* had little advantage save his title of *ingenuus* over the representative of the next class below him in the social scale, the *lidus*,[4] who could also prosecute or defend himself at law. But he was still in a relation of dependence upon his lord. His holding (*mansus lidialis*) was subject to certain rent payments and he had to give certain days of labour; he further paid a fixed due called the *lidimonium*. If he left no son his possessions reverted to the lord. In war he was not a regular soldier, but attended upon his master; in peace he could be treated as a chattel, and, as in the later Middle Ages, could be torn from his home and sent whither his lord willed (VI. 32 (45)). The relative importance of the *lidus* is shown by the rate of compensation paid if he were killed; in Alamannic law his *wergeld* stood at 80 *sols*, that of the free man being 160, that of the serf 40 *sols*. A man in servile condition could obtain freedom by buying it with his *peculium*, or by receiving it as a gift from his master: the lord who wished to set himself right with the Church or ease a guilty conscience would often give freedom to serfs. The king would enfranchise three serfs of each sex upon all of his *villae* at the birth of a prince.[1]

---

[1] For *coloni* see de Coulanges, 'Le colonat romain,' in *Recherches sur quelques problèmes d'histoire* (Paris, 1885), and *Hist. des inst. pol.* iv, p. 355; B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon* (1844), i, pp. 225 ff.; H. Sée, *Les classes rurales et le régime domanial en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1901), pp. 8–10.

[2] The holding of the *colonus* was called *mansus ingenuilis*.

[3] Fustel de Coulanges, *Les origines du système féodal* (Paris, 1890), i, p. 104.

[4] Gregory does not use this term in the History, and it is sometimes difficult to say to what group of the unfree he alludes; he often describes those of servile status as *pueri* (V. 49, &c.), and *servientes* (V. 39; VI. 11, &c.). For *lidi* cf. B. Guérard, as above, pp. 250 ff.; K. Zeumer, 'Über die Beerbung der Freigelassenen durch den Fiscus nach fränkischem Recht,' in *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte*, xxiii.

Slaves were partly born, partly 'made'. The son of a slave was by the fact of such birth a slave (*servus, mancipium*). Captives taken in war were enslaved; there was a slave-market where imported slaves were sold;[2] free men who failed to pay their compositions temporarily forfeited their free condition, criminals might be degraded to servile condition; innocent people might receive the same treatment (V. S. M. 41). A man from religious motives might voluntarily become the slave of a monastery. A slave was not a person in law; his *wergeld* was comparable to that of a horse, and only about a quarter that of an ordinary free man. The master could inflict brutal punishment on him without interference from the law; the pages of the History afford numerous instances of this.[3] The State did nothing with regard to slaves but help the master to catch those who escaped, and fine any person who harboured fugitives. The Church alone stood for the better treatment of serfs and slaves,[4] and her own were probably spared the gross ill-usage to which they were subjected by lay masters.[5] Slaves formed two main groups, the domestic, and the agricultural.[6] The former (*vassi ad mini-*

---

[1] Cf. the *formula* of Angers in M. G. H., *Legum*, Sect. V, Bk. I, no. 39, p. 68.

[2] As we learn from the Letters of Gregory the Great, Jewish dealers went from Italy to Gaul to buy slaves for whom they had orders. The pope commanded that Christian slaves in Jewish hands should be disposed of to Christian purchasers, since the secular law permitted the traffic. Slaves from England were sold in Gaul. They may have been in part of Celtic origin, but the well-known story of Gregory the Great and the Anglian boys from Deira, offered for sale in Rome, shows that many were of Teutonic birth. They were probably prisoners of war, captured during the internecine wars of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

[3] They were beaten, mutilated, and cruelly put to death. A brutal master like Rauching might habitually torture his bondmen for his own amusement (V. 3).

[4] The Council of Epaone in 517 pronounced excommunication for two years against any one killing a slave whom a judge had not previously condemned to death. It also decreed that married slaves were not to be separated (Pfister, as above, p. 195).

[5] For the condition of Church slaves see P. Bernard, *Étude sur les esclaves et les serfs d'Église du 6me au 13e siècle* (Paris, 1919). As in Italy, runaway Church slaves could be recovered (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 304).

[6] The Romans in the earlier centuries of the empire commonly enfranchised urban slaves because they were town-dwellers, and the members of their urban *familia* were personally known to them; they left the peasant slaves as they were (H. Sée, as above, p. 7). Thus, the class of freedmen or serfs did not grow up rapidly in the country, where estates were worked by gangs of slaves, living in barracks, and having neither home nor family. But bad as their position was under the Merovingians, it was better than in Roman times.

sterium) included not only those actually serving in the lord's house, but those living in the extensive dependencies round it, carpenters, smiths, goldsmiths, stablemen, and even keepers of the swine. Standing in a closer relation to the family were cooks and household slaves, sometimes including men able to teach the rudiments of reading and arithmetic. All these slaves, having their accomplishments, had a relatively high value. Agricultural slaves (*servi casati*, or *mansionarii*) stood lowest in the scale, they lived in huts on the land, where they had plots allotted to them, which they might cultivate after they had given the lord the prescribed number of days' work. They had to pay various dues, but were allowed to save what they could, and amass a *peculium*, with which they might buy a relative freedom. There were various methods of enfranchisement described by Ducange (vol. iv, s. v. *Manumissio*) ;[1] the most important were those 'by the denier' (*per denarium*), by will (*per testamentum*), and by formal letter (*per tabulas*, or *per chartulam*). It would seem that they were employed in the case both of the slaves and of the *lidi*.[2] By the former procedure the person to be freed was brought before the king, and a coin, symbolical of his value, was knocked out of his hand ; he was afterwards known as *denariatus*, or *denarialis* (*Lex Sal.; tit.* 48 ; *Lex Rip*. 57, § i). By the other methods his freedom was given by a clause in a will or by a letter of enfranchisement (*tabula*,

---

They were no longer drawn from anywhere and herded in barracks, without right to marriage or the possession of home or family, and liable to be constantly moved from place to place. The establishment of the Franks in Gaul led to the attachment of slaves to particular estates where they were usually allowed to remain. As the influence of the Church had secured the recognition of their marriages, they had homes, however wretched, and they had families ; and by degrees they rose to the rank of serfs (C. Seignobos, *Le régime féodal en Bourgogne* (Paris, 1882), pp. 61–3).

[1] See also M. Fournier, 'Les affranchissements du V^e au XIII^e siècle : l'influence de l'église de la royauté et des particuliers sur les conditions des affranchis,' in *Rev. Hist.*, 1883 ; the same writer, 'Essai sur les formes et les effets de l'affranchissement dans le droit Gallo-franc,' in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lx, 1885. Cf. also Fustel de Coulanges, as above, iv, pp. 303 ff.

[2] Cf. *Lex Salica, tit.* 26, 1, *De libertis dimissis*, where there are two clauses regulating the fines to be paid for enfranchising another man's bondman and his slave respectively. If a man of free birth privily effects the manumission of another's bondman (*Si quis homo ingenuus alienum letum extra consilium domini sui ante rege per denario demiserit*) he has to pay one hundred *solidi*. If by the same process he manumits a slave (*Si quis vero servo alieno per denario ante regem dimiserit*) he pays the value of the slave *plus* thirty-five *solidi*. Here the two classes of *lidi* and slaves are clearly distinguished, and both receive manumission before the king (by the *denier*).

charta), and he was afterwards known as *tabularius* or *chartulatus*; the ceremony of enfranchising *per tabulas* was commonly performed in church.[1]

The condition of the unfree, to whatever category they belonged, was one of insecurity against personal injury and loss. All suffered from the quarrels of their masters, and from the constant wars between the kings. They suffered from lawlessness; they were not protected by the king's justice; for the counts who administered it were often themselves unjust. In most matters the unfree were exposed to the arbitrary treatment of their lords, who upon their own domains would have been able to evade the law even had it attempted to interfere between them and their dependents; and in many cases the great estates had immunity from visitation by the royal officers (p. 387). The dues and services of serfs varied in manner of payment from domain to domain,[2] and their tenure, though often undisturbed, was at the sole discretion of the lord, who could remove them at will. Their private life was not their own; the lord's sanction was necessary before they could marry (V. 3); their children could be taken from them. In estates upon which the lord did not reside, they were left under the control of agents who modelled their conduct upon that of their masters. Even the relative peace and happiness open to the unfree depended upon personal considerations. The character of the individual master was a matter of vital importance, and that of the average great landowner was bad; where proprietors were almost uneducated and brought up in idleness and licence, the worst elements in their nature were most easily developed. There were exceptions, like Gogo (p. 88), but such men must have formed a small minority. The Church had a better name as landlord than the great lay proprietors; but the bishops were very independent in their dioceses; here again the character of an individual might determine the fortunes of thousands; though there were many bishops of real piety, who sought to practise the precepts of the Gospel, there were others who followed the worst example of the secular aristocracy (p. 87). A great territorial system was becoming necessary to the maintenance of the Church, which began to grow 'domanial' as in later centuries she grew feudal; the material interest of the Church as a whole began to demand of the ecclesiastic acquiescence in usages against which his private instincts of charity rebelled. But the process was at an early stage; there was more scope for free action on the part of the good-hearted churchman; and perhaps some points should be added to the five per cent. advantage in good treatment which the Church serfs of the later Middle Ages enjoyed over those in the power of secular landlords.[1]

---

[1] For *manumissio per tabulas* (cf. X. 9) see the Third Council of Orleans (A.D. 538), canon 26, and *Lex Rip. tit.* 56; for the procedure, see B. Guérard, as above, pp. 368–9. *Manumissio per chartam* is mentioned in *Lex Alaman.*, *tit.* 17 and 18, § 1; see also the Sixth Council of Toledo, canon 9. Cf. IX. 26.

[2] H. Sée, as above, p. 16.

Attention may be drawn to a few passages in the History mentioning episodes in the life of those in the servile state.

Royal servants, though exposed, like others, to the caprice of dangerous masters, enjoyed a privileged position, of which they knew how to take advantage at the cost of persons of no small consideration. When Fortunatus was on his way by water to Sigibert's court at Metz, and was not far from that city, he left his boat for a while. On his return he found it appropriated by the king's cook, who actually went off with it, leaving the poet to be rescued by a boat kindly sent for him by the bishop.[2] The servants of princes sometimes enjoyed their confidence, and in return followed them with devotion. When Merovech found that the hour had come for him to die, he called upon Gailen, his trusted follower, to do him the last service (V. 12 (18)). Kindly feeling may have induced Ingoberg, widow of King Charibert, to give freedom to many of them by her will (IX. 26).[3] On the other hand, slaves were liable to be treated as scapegoats; they had to take on their shoulders the guilt imputed to their masters. A criminal but powerful person when charged with an offence would put forward one of his slaves as the real culprit. So Fredegund accused one of her servants after the murder of Praetextatus (VIII. 31), surrendering him to the nephew of the dead bishop (VIII. 41). Subjected to torture, the man confessed that he had been given money by the queen herself, by Bishop Melantius, and by the archdeacon.[1] Thereupon he was cut to pieces.

---

[1] Cf. Coulton, as above, p. 142.

[2] Fortunatus revenged himself by a pungent description of the cook as a smoky creature with a heart black as his face, which resembled one of his own cooking-pots:

> *Indignus versu, potius carbone notetur,*
> *Et piceum referat turpis imago virum.* (*Carm.* vi. 10.)

[3] Though, as in similar cases during later periods of the Middle Ages, her first thought may have been for the good of her own soul. Charitable persons sometimes bought slaves their freedom (G. C. 67).

The chief case of a free person being forced into a servile condition is that of Attalus, nephew of Gregory's ancestor and namesake, the bishop of Langres. It was the misfortune of this young man to have been a hostage at a time when peace was suddenly broken, when he was declared a slave.[2] Attalus, now became the hero of an exciting story of escape,[3] doubtless well known in Gregory's family. He was handed over to a rich Frank and became a horse-keeper. When the faithful cook Leo returned to Gregory of Langres, bringing with him the hostage rescued by his gallantry, the bishop enfranchised him with all his family, and gave him land on which he lived in freedom for the rest of his days.[4]

The better among the bishops and clergy sought to protect from ill-treatment all slaves who took sanctuary in churches to escape ill-treatment (p. 312). The Church claimed that supernatural vengeance overtook such masters as dared to defy the right of sanctuary. Such a master, in pursuit of a refugee slave in the church where S. Lupus was buried, came in and began to abuse the saint; he was stricken dumb, and died within a few days (G. C. 66). The fear thus instilled into the minds of the superstitious must have been of great service to slaves.

In the Merovingian society of the sixth century there was too uncontrolled a liberty at the top, and too little freedom at the bottom. Though there was no slavery on so large a scale as that existing under the Roman Empire, though the greater number of the unfree were serfs with small cottages or huts where they lived with their wives and children, yet their lives were hard and they were subject to rough or brutal treatment for which they had small chance of redress.

---

[1] The amounts purporting to have been given by the parties are interesting. Fredegund gives a hundred gold pieces; the bishop and the archdeacon fifty each.

[2] III. 15: *ad publicum servitium mancipavit*. The occasion was the rupture of peace between Childebert I and Theuderic, king of Austrasia.

[3] III. 15.

[4] *Leonem autem a iugo servitutis absolvens cum omni generatione sua, dedit ei terram propriam in qua cum uxore et liberis liber vixit omnibus diebus vitae suae.* Leo must have then enjoyed a position, if not of absolute freedom, at least equal to that of a *colonus*.

The beggars, of whom we read much, may not all have belonged to the servile class; but whatever their origin, their lot was often far easier than that of active serfs or slaves. Sometimes they supported themselves by a pretence of service rendered for money received, like the man who carried about a letter of the blessed Nicetius (p. 309), celebrated during his life for his powers of healing and releasing prisoners from captivity. He made a small charge for the privilege of seeing and touching this document, which he evidently found a valuable possession, since an accident one day revealed the fact that he had six gold pieces on his person.[1] At other times 'professional' beggars tramped the country, taking with them children and others suffering from deformity or disease, in order to awaken compassion; poor children thus afflicted would often be handed over to them by their parents.[2] Beggars would take up a permanent position outside the entrance of a church, and perhaps their perseverance might be rewarded by the addition of their names to the *matricula*, or list of those entitled to regular relief (pp. 276, 315), when they had no further need to beg.[3]

c. *The Family and Position of Women.*

The family was the unit of society;[4] its solidarity was maintained alike by law and by ancient usage, its members acting together in prosecuting a feud, in paying a composition, and in taking a collective oath in support of one of their number accused of an offence. Women held an honoured place, but were not admitted to the family council because they were unable to carry arms. They could not appear in courts, and among the Salian Franks could not inherit certain ancestral lands. Even women of free birth could not marry without the consent of their parents. But their importance to the community was recognized by the high amount of their *wergeld*, and socially they enjoyed much freedom and power. They held and inherited property in their own right,[1] and received great wealth from their husbands;[2] they asserted their personalities in the household and, if of royal rank, in the kingdom. Few kings had more power than Fredegund and Brunhild both as queen-consort and as queen-mother. In the latter position they stultified the Salic law by influencing and directing the high policy of their respective kingdoms; in the former position Fredegund, as the power behind the throne, made Chilperic wholly subservient to her will. We find examples of the *maîtresse femme* in less exalted ranks. In those days, as now, the women of Gaul were active and competent in affairs. Magatrude, wife of Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans, beat off, with the help of her servants, the lawless Chuppa, who came by night with a band of followers to carry off her daughter (X. 5). It is true that capacity and presence of mind were sometimes accompanied by a certain hardness, which in its turn might develop into a cruelty as absolute as that of the most ruthless men. The supreme example is again Queen Fredegund; pitiless resolution is shown in the punishment of her old enemy Leudast (VI. 23 (32)). This man, after receiving some countenance from the king, ventured to appear at Paris, and threw himself at the queen's feet in church, imploring her pardon. But she, filled with fury and loathing at the sight of him, thrust him from her, saying: 'I have no longer any sons to defend my cause, therefore, Lord Jesus, I remit it to thy care.' She then made petition to the king: 'Woe is me! who see my enemy before me, and nothing prevail against him.'[3] Leudast was then ejected from the church while the royal pair heard mass. When they came out he was suddenly assailed by servants of the queen's household, who sought to bind him. Swords were drawn and Leudast received a terrible wound. While he was trying to escape over the bridge his foot slipped and he fractured his leg. The king then ordered that the doctors should tend him till he was strong enough to bear daily torture. But by the time he had been brought to a royal domain, gangrene had begun and it was seen that he could not survive. By order of the queen he was done to death with iron bars; she could not be baulked of her vengeance by his death in the course of nature.[1] In utterly inhuman cruelty even Fredegund was eclipsed by the above-mentioned Magatrude, whose qualities of fearlessness and resolution were marred by a vein of simple savagery (VIII. 39). The actions of this woman are almost incredible even to a student inured to the horrors of the sixth century. But the power which women exerted indirectly through their influence over men, if often evil, was more often exerted for good. Queen Brunhild's direction of her young son, Childebert, was assuredly more for good than for evil; but as she advanced in years her nature deteriorated, and her influence over her grandsons was worthy of the censure it received from Columban (cf. p. 71). Other queens used their influence over their husbands for the advantage of Christianity.[2] Chlodosind, daughter of Lothar I, influenced Alboin the Lombard; Bertha, daughter of Charibert, Ethelbert of Kent; Ingund, daughter of Sigibert, Hermangild, son of the Visigothic king, whose brother Recared later abjured the Arian heresy. There can be little doubt of the direction which the brief influence of Radegund over Lothar I received.

---

[1] He was robbed by a Burgundian, who took the gold pieces but left the letter (V. P. viii. 9).

[2] V. S. M. iii. 16; of a blind child: *datus est mendicis ut vel cum eisdem ambulaus stipendii quiddam acciperet.* V. M. iv. 58; of a boy: *mendicis quibus deputatus est,* with them he remained ten years. Cf. V. M. ii. 46.

[3] Such may have been the regular beggars outside the church of S. Martin at Tours, who joined the poor men on the *matricula* in their pursuit of the murderer Claudius (VII. 26 (29)).

[4] For the family, see C. Galy, *La famille à l'époque mérov.*, pp. 167 ff., 372 ff.

---

[1] See the provision for princess Clotild in IX. 20, and the dispute of Ingitrude and her daughter (IX. 33). Cf. the *formula* of Angers, in M. G. H., *Legum*, Sect. V, p. 5, and that in Marculf, *ibid.*, p. 83.

[2] Cf. the picture of the rich woman in the wife of Duke Rauching, riding to hear mass at Soissons with a large retinue, herself all bedecked with jewels and gold ornaments (IX. 9). Women were sometimes excluded from the inheritance of ancestral lands, but could inherit or hold other real estate and personalty. When a man died, the sons and daughters, mother, brother, sister, and maternal aunt, inherited in the order named.

[3] *At illa frendens et execrans aspectum eius, a se reppulit, fusisque lacrimis ait: 'Et quia non extat de filiis, qui criminis mei causas inquaerat, tibi eas, Iesu domine, inquirendas committo.' Prostrataque pedibus regis, adiecit: 'Vae mihi, quae video inimicum meum, et nihil ei praevaleo.'*

It is probable that the number of educated women was small. Abbesses by profession needed a measure of education, and could doubtless read and write, but outside the monastery such accomplishment cannot have been common. Perhaps the most lettered woman in Gaul was Brunhild, born a Visigothic princess, and declared by Fortunatus to have had many accomplishments. In this case there may have been solid ground for the poet's eulogies, and it is quite possible that when Gregory the Great wrote to her at the time of Augustine's mission to England, she was able not only to read his letters but also to reply in the Latin language. Clotild, queen of Clovis, who had been a Burgundian princess, is represented by our author as alluding to Virgil while seeking to convert the king to Christianity (II. 20 (29)), but as the story of the conversion and its attendant circumstances had been embroidered with legendary additions, the queen's speech may be a rhetorical addition, without value as evidence of her learning.

---

[1] The committal of her cause to Christ becomes doubly abominable in view of this deliberate brutality. Fredegund was equally merciless in ordering the torture of persons belonging to her own sex who had incurred her ill-will (V. 29 (39)).

[2] Cf. Ruinart, *Praefatio*, § 18.

The women of the unfree shared the disabilities of their husbands. They could only marry by consent of their lords, and if they married a man of a class above their own, the status of the children was determined by that of the mother. The female serfs who worked in the *gynaecaea* of the royal *villae*, or in the houses of landed proprietors, principally weaving or sewing, were exposed to certain risks ; and in later centuries the *gynaecaea* had a bad name.[1] But female serfs sometimes rose to the throne, as witness the cases of Merofled and Marcovefa (IV. 18 (26)), and their children were accounted royal.

It is an old tradition that women were the first to use witchcraft, and that they first attained supremacy in all manner of enchantments : Livy, Plutarch, Strabo, Diodorus, and Augustine, in the third book of his *City of God*, all appear to accept the tradition.[2] Certainly they were at least the equals of men in practical superstition in the sixth century, and Gregory relates various instances of their belief and practice. They were the vehicles or mediums of spirits : we read more than once of the 'pythoness' (cf. p. 250) ; they were ready to see the influence of the witch in any serious misfortune. The 'palace plot' against Queens Faileuba and Brunhild (IX. 38) illustrates the extent of this belief.

---

[1] B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon*, i (Prolegomena), pp. 617 ff. ; in this volume information will be found as to marriage between members of different unfree groups, and the status of children born of such unions.

[2] G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i, p. 541, Appendix, 'Women and Witchcraft'.

II

MATERIAL CONDITIONS: TOWNS AND HOUSES

IT is clear from various passages that the towns, often walled,[1] had streets, though these need not have been bordered by houses in close rows. There were certainly regular shops. Leudast, in the hours before his violent death, wandered through a street in Paris, going from one merchant's house to another, inspecting the precious objects (*species*) exposed for sale (VI. 23 (33)).

We more than once read of fires devastating the towns, and the rapid spread of the flames suggests that the houses were close together. Stories of conflagration in Gregory are usually told to illustrate the potency of relics in staying their progress; a description of a great fire at Paris is accompanied by mention of a curious discovery.[2] In the East, about the Rhine, stone houses gradually came in from the West from the close of the eighth century (K. Schumacher, *Siedelungs- und Kulturgeschichte der Rheinlande*, iii, 1925, p. 213).

In domestic building we have probably to assume that wood was extensively used; but wooden houses were not all rough; sometimes they were finely constructed and embellished.[3] Important buildings, such as the residence of a king or of a wealthy man, were probably of wood in the north; but in the centre and south partly, at least, of masonry. The walls were often carried up to an upper floor: Duke Rauching was killed on the upper floor in the palace at Metz (IX. 9); sometimes there was even a second upper storey.[4] On the upper floor were the *solaria*, to which more than once allusion is made.[1] The roof may in some cases have been covered with metal, but tiles were probably common, and shingles may sometimes have been employed.[2]

---

[1] The cities were walled, some from Roman times; cf. A. Marignan, *Études*, i, p. 50. At Rouen, Brunhild and Merovech take refuge in a wooden oratory on the walls (V. 2). Dijon, though not a city, had imposing walls (III. 19). The existing walls of Saint-Moré, Yonne, may be partly of Merovingian date (M. Prou, *La Gaule mérov.*, fig. 68).

[2] A serpent and mouse of bronze were found in the Seine (VIII. 33).

[3] Cf. the poem of Fortunatus, *De domo lignea* (*Carm.* ix. 15).

[4] Nicetius, bishop of Trèves had a fortified country house of three storeys (cf. p. 408). Fortunatus speaks of country houses built by Bishop Leontius near Bordeaux and on the Garonne.

The Franks were not by nature town-dwellers, and the kings preferred to spend most of their time on their domains in the country, usually in or near forests where they could indulge their passion for the chase; the most familiar of these were Berny-Rivière (*Brinnacum*) near Soissons, Vitry, Rueil, Compiègne, and Marlenheim in Alsace,[3] all open residences and in no way resembling the moated and fortified medieval castle. Here they maintained a great household and a court at which there were always present, in addition to permanent officials, dukes and counts looking for fresh appointments, bishops awaiting audience, and *antrustions* (p. 386) of the king's guard, some of whom doubtless belonged to the circle of his familiar friends. The women's quarters were in a separate part of the building, and here maids were kept at work spinning, weaving, embroidering, and probably making clothes for the ladies of the royal house. They were, on the one hand, exposed to the advances of the king or his sons, on the other, to cruel treatment on the part of the queens.[4] There must always have been halls for dining and for audience,[5] and a chapel. Another constant feature was the treasure-chamber, the king and the queen apparently having each a separate one, for the quantity of jewels, ornaments, and rich raiment amassed by the Merovingians was notably large. After the death of King Chilperic, Queen Fredegund found her daughter Rigunth insupportable, and only a chance prevented her treasure-room from becoming the scene of a tragedy. She opened a great chest of precious things, and after some preliminary gifts suggested that the girl should put in her hands and help herself. While she was bending over to do so the queen brought down the heavy lid of the chest on her neck, and was proceeding to suffocate her when maids broke in and frustrated her purpose (IX. 34). There were probably bath-chambers in the royal houses, and these may sometimes have been heated by hot air in the Roman fashion. Such baths were used by the Ostrogoths in Italy; in one, the Princess Amalasuntha was done to death by being shut up and kept confined in excessive heat (III. 31), and the use of vapour and steam baths may well have survived the fall of the empire in the West.[1] The bath-room of the nuns in the monastery at Poitiers was a chamber with plastered walls (cf. X. 16), and a royal villa is not likely to have been less well furnished in this respect than a nunnery. The villa had a court (*atrium*), in which Gregory and Bishop Salvius were standing when the latter saw the vision of 'the unsheathed sword of the divine wrath above the house'.[2]

---

[1] In II. 47, the bride who decides to abandon the secular life tells the bridegroom to 'keep his *solaria*' and all the other signs of wealth, for she will have none of them. In X. 14 we read of a *solarium* of the bishop of Angers on the town wall; but here the wall itself may be counted as the lower storey.

[2] Roof beams were large and heavy. Duke Beppolen nearly lost his life banqueting with his friends when the roof fell in (VIII. 42).

[3] Other *villae* were at Nogent, Chelles, and Noisy-le-Grand. The kings also owned numerous domains throughout the country, placed under the supervision of *domestici*, who were often men of high position; Mabillon in his *De re diplomatica*, gives the number of royal domains as more than 150. For the Frankish royal *villas* see K. Plath, *Die Königspfalzen der Merovinger und Karolinger*, Berlin, 1892; cf. also A. Marignan, as above, i, pp. 39, 49, 77 ff. The chief royal residences of the later Merovingian period were in the forest of Cuise, now represented by the forests of Compiègne and Choisi; they were the *villae* of Maumagues, Compiègne, and Choisi.

[4] Cf. B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon*, Paris, 1844, pt. I, pp. 618 ff.

[5] Cf. the account given by Sidonius of the palace of the Visigothic king Theodoric II at Toulouse (*Letters*, trs. O. M. Dalton, i. 2).

Adjoining the residence were the quarters of the intendant, forester, head of the stables, and other persons not immediately connected with the administration of the household. There were also those of the *fiscalini*, or serfs of the domain, whose number included craftsmen of all kinds, wheelwrights, carpenters, smiths, armourers, weavers,[3] goldsmiths, preparers of skins and leather-workers, men who may in large measure have inherited their skill from fathers plying the same craft before them. Members of the Roman industrial corporations were probably impressed by the first Teutonic kings, and established in the dependencies of the royal residences; these men would have handed down their traditions to their sons and their sons to later generations. The cottages of the agricultural labourers, gardeners, grooms, shepherds, and others swelled the size of the great group of buildings. The Merovingian *villa* was, in fact, a kind of royal village, almost a township.[1] It was very nearly self-supporting, since it produced almost everything required to satisfy the necessities and the luxuries of its owner.[2] Though probably less well ordered and administered, it must in many ways have resembled the royal domain in the time of Charles the Great, of which interesting facts have been preserved in that emperor's capitulary entitled: *De villis*.[3] As in the later Carolingian age, the *fiscalini*, whether toiling on the land or in the workshops, probably led a hard life, and were punished for dereliction of duty.[4] The staff of the Carolingian royal *villa*, controlled by the *iudex* or superintendent (ch. 45) included blacksmiths, armourers, carpenters, turners, coopers, cobblers, silversmiths, and jewel-makers (*aurifices vel argentarii*), soap-makers, makers of fermented liquor other than wine, i. e. beer (*cervisa*), cider (*pomatium*), perry (*piratium*). Outside workers included vintagers, who had to keep wine-presses (*torcularia*) clean, and were forbidden to tread the grapes with their feet (ch. 48); gardeners, bee-keepers, grooms (*poledrarii*), kennel men; huntsmen and keepers (*venatores*), falconers (*falconarii*),[5] and fishermen. In ch. 64 there is an interesting requirement with regard to certain *carrae*, which seem to have been the commissariat-waggons of the day, kept at the royal *villae* for use when needed.[1] Each *villa* had to be properly supplied with beds and bedding, including linen sheets (*batliniae*), seats, tables, and table-cloths; domestic vessels of wood and metal, andirons, pot-hooks and chains, and certain useful tools: axes, drills, and various other implements (ch. 42). The women's workrooms (*genitia*, i. e. *gynaecea*) were furnished (ch. 43) with linen and wool, carding combs, teazles, soap, and red dye-stuffs of two kinds (*vermiculum* and *warentia*, from which may perhaps come the French word *garance*). The *iudex* of such an establishment had evidently a difficult and responsible position, especially as he had to produce exact accounts of each department.[2]

---

[1] Large fires must have been kept up in the kitchens, and perhaps also in the halls. Fortunatus, travelling by boat down the Moselle, notices the *fumantia tecta* of the *villae* which he passed. Chimneys were known at this period (A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 78); perhaps the smoke of the hall escaped through a *louvre* in the roof. Fire was obtained by flint and steel (G. M. 56).

[2] V. 33 (50). Salvius asked Gregory if he could see anything above the roof? Gregory replied that he only saw the *supertegulum* which the king had recently placed in position.

[3] King Charibert married in succession two sisters, daughters of a weaver who was a *fiscalinus*.

---

[1] Some *villae* did actually develop into towns, others into feudal castles.

[2] Corn was ground by water-mills on the nearest stream or river, the flour being baked at the *villa*.

[3] Text, ed. by A. Boretius, in M. G. H., *Legum, Sectio II*, vol. i (1883), pp. 82 ff. Cf. also B. Guérard, in *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, Jan. 1853. A. Dopsch, *Die Wirthschaftsentwicklung der Karolingerzeit in Deutschland* (Weimar, 1912), argues that the capitulary is later than the time of Charles, and therefore that its economic importance is less than has been supposed; Cf. F. Lot, *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxiv, p. 362. The *polyptych*, or register, of Irmino, abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (812–17) gives further information on the social condition of working men in the ninth century (cf. B. Guérard, *Le polyptyque de l'Abbé Irminon*, 1844; A. Longnon, *Soc. hist. de France*, 1886, pp. 2–5; N. de Wailly, *Journal des Savants*, 1845, pp. 117 ff., 423 ff., 563 ff.

[4] The *fiscalinus* guilty of theft was liable to capital punishment unless he was able to pay a composition. Other serious faults were punished by flogging. For lighter offences men were deprived for a period of all meat and wine.

[5] The *venatores* and *falconarii* were instructed to discuss their orders together. In the province of the former doubtless fell the destruction of wolves, which were to be systematically taken, not only by hunting with dogs, but in prepared pits, by hooks, and by a poison in the form of powder (ch. 69).

The royal residences in country or town, but especially in the country, had gardens well stocked with fruit. Fortunatus describes the garden laid out by Childebert I at Paris, praising its verdant grass, its varied flowers, its vine-pergola and its fine apples.[3] It was in the garden of the palace at Paris that Chilperic received Gregory during the session of the Council of Paris, on the occasion when he quoted to him the proverb: 'Crows do not pike out crows' een.' Gardens were the usual adjunct of the houses of private persons as well as of monasteries (p. 371); Fortunatus seems to have had one at Poitiers, from which he used to send Radegund flowers, notably violets, accompanying them with courtly verses.[4] There is a pleasant picture in Gregory's book on the Confessors of a priest who loved flowers.[5] When the lilies bloomed in their season he was in the habit of picking them in order to decorate the walls of his church.

---

[1] *Ut carra nostra quae in hostem pergunt* (i.e. which go with the army) *bene facta sint, et operculi bene sint cum coriis cooperti* . . . Each wagon is to carry flour and wine, and also arms: *scutum et lanceam, cucurum et arcum*, perhaps for the defence of the drivers. In Merovingian times the armies fended for themselves so freely, that probably these wagons were a result of Carolingian reform.

[2] Ch. 62. Some departments were expected to make a profit by sales when the king was not in residence, this was the case with fish from the fish-ponds (*vivaria*, ch. 65). Perhaps the surplus produce of gardens and orchards was disposed of in the same way.

[3] *Carm.* vi. 8. Apples were a favourite fruit; Gregory used to send presents of them to Fortunatus, who has left us his poetical acknowledgements (cf. p. 84 n.).

[4] In VIII. 10 he praises the violet for its fragrance and royal colour; in VIII. 11 he praises Radegund and Agnes for bringing flowers for the decoration of the altar; VIII. 12 begins with the following lines:

O regina potens, cui aurum et purpura vile est,
Floribus ex parvis te veneratur amans.

[5] G. C. 49: *Solitus erat namque flores liliorum tempore quo nascuntur colligere ac per parietes huius aedis appendere.*

In the case of gardens, as in that of the domestic arrangements in the house and its offices, we may again find the later Frankish parallel of value.[1] The Carolingian garden was evidently extensive, and adjoined extensive orchards. In the description of the plants filling the garden we find vegetables, flowers, simples and dye-plants indiscriminately mixed, though we need not, perhaps, infer a similar promiscuity in the garden itself. A few examples from the mixed array are here given in the order of mention in the capitulary: lilies, roses, salvia, cucumber, gourd, cummin, rosemary, sea-onion, gladiolus (*iris germanica*), anise, lettuce, nasturtium, fennel, endive, mustard, poppy, beet-root, mallow, onions (*uniones*), radish, garlic, madder, and beans. Among the fruit and nut trees in the orchards were: apple, pear, plum, cherry, medlar, chestnut, almond, hazel, and mulberry. The bay (*laurus nobilis*) occurs in the list.

The city palaces of the kings are naturally mentioned less frequently than the *villae*, where the kings spent the greater part of their time. The royal palace at Paris was probably a part of the old Roman palace of the Thermae, the ruins of which are close to the Hôtel de Cluny. This had been the residence of Childebert I, son of Clovis, and here this king abetted his brother, Lothar, in the murder of their nephews, the sons of Charibert (p. 48). Here Brunhild and her young son Childebert II were first kept under surveillance after the murder of Sigibert at Vitry. A town palace at Vienne[2] is mentioned as having been struck by lightning (II. 25 (34)). The amenities of a city palace might be increased by its situation on a river bank. At ~~Metz~~, Childebert and his family, seated at table, could watch salmon being caught in the ~~Moselle~~ Rhine; the king would count their number and applaud the taking of a big fish.[3]

---

[1] Cf. the *De villis*, as above (ch. 70). It is interesting to note that the gardener is enjoined to have 'Jove's beard' (*sempervivum tectorium*) upon his house.

[2] *Palatium regale intramuraneum.*

[3] Fortunatus, *Carm.* x. 10:

> *Retibus inspicitur quo salmo fasce levatur*
> *Et numerat pisces cum sit in arce sedens.*
> *Rex favet immensa resilit dum piscis ab unda . . .*

The transition from the walled Roman or Byzantine palace[1] to the Merovingian residence would lie through such palaces as those of the Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great at Ravenna,[2] or of the Visigothic king Theuderic II at Toulouse, of which Sidonius[3] has given some details. Like later medieval princes the Merovingian kings were frequently on the move from one residence to another.[4] On such occasions the king would ride on horseback,[5] the ladies perhaps travelling in vehicles, and the household gear probably following or preceding in carts. In any case there must have been a large cavalcade of courtiers and guards.

The dwellings of the wealthier aristocracy must have resembled the royal villas, with the difference that they had not to accommodate officials or guards, and that their dependencies were smaller. The furniture both in the palaces of the kings and in the houses of the wealthy consisted probably of solid wooden seats, benches, and tables, on which rugs or cushions were laid.[6] Beds must also have been of wood ; but as in more than one place in his writings Gregory, contrasting the hard couch of the hermits with that of other persons, declares that feathers were not for them, we may assume that the feather-bed was in common use.[7] Rooms were lighted both by candles and by oil-lamps, and some were heated.

It was seldom that the Church competed with kings or magnates in the matter of houses to live in ; there were no prince-bishops in Gregory's time, and the simplicity of the bishop's house is noticed on another page (p. 343). But in the previous generation there seem to have been a few exceptions, and attention may be drawn to a great fortified residence built on the Moselle by bishop Nicetius of Trèves (d. 566) in the earlier part of the century, when perhaps the tradition of Roman luxury still lingered in the region of the Meuse and Rhine.[1] The place as described by Fortunatus, who must have seen it, seems to have combined the qualities of a Roman villa and a medieval castle. It was of great extent and mass, and evidently rose to some height: *et monti imposito mons erat ipsa domus*.[2] It had a great columned hall and a chapel, and was protected by a large *ballista* posted at a point of vantage. Watermills were worked by canalized streams, and vines were irrigated. The buildings were protected by high surrounding walls, which on two sides ran down to the river; there were no less than thirty towers.[3] Round the castle were vineyards and orchards (*pomorum plantaria*), flower gardens, and, by the river, a watermill.[4]

---

[1] Like certain imperial palaces, for instance, that of Diocletian at Spalato, as to which we are now well informed. Cf. E. Hébrard and J. Zeiller, *Spalato, le palais de Dioclétien*, Paris, 1912 ; and the fine old book by the brothers Adam. For later Byzantine palaces see de Beylié, *L'habitation byzantine*.

[2] A representation of the façade, with curtained portico and arched loggia above, is seen in the nave mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo, which was the church of the court. The houses of the Frankish kings who lived in the north of Gaul may also have had porticoes, but they were probably built with more regard to withstanding cold.

[3] See note 2 on p. 402, above.

[4] Chilperic moves from Nogent to Paris : *impedimenta moveri praecipiens Parisius venire disponit* (VI. 5).

[5] *Ibid.* : *Rex vero ascenso equite Parisius est regressus cum coniuge et filia vel omne familia sua.*

[6] *Scamna operta stragulis* (IX. 35).

[7] In mentioning the 'punishing' bed of S. Radegund, the nun Baudonivia (*Vita S. Rad.*, Bk. II, 8) says that *it* had no feathers, nor did any *linteaminis nitor* make it seemly. The last phrase seems to imply the use of sheets in houses where comfort was possible. For bedrooms and beds cf. A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 80.

[1] It has been noted above that Fortunatus, describing a river journey in these parts, mentions the smoke of the numerous villas which he saw from his boat. The wealthy naturally chose these favoured valleys as their place of residence.

[2] Fortunatus, *Carm.* iii. 12; the region may have been exposed to raids. Cf. his shorter account of a villa at Bordeaux (i. 19).

[3] *Incinxit collem terdenis turribus* . . .

[4] The nature of this may be inferred from the description of another watermill, which the abbot Ursus substituted for the handmills hitherto used by his monks. *Defixisque per flumen palis, adgregatis lapidum magnorum acervis, exclusas fecit, atque aquam canale collegit, cuius impetu rotam fabricae in magna volubilitate vertere fecit* (V. P. xviii).

III

KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

a. Letters and Education.

EDUCATION in the sixth century was passing into religious channels, and as the springs dried up these were narrower and shallower than those of the preceding age. The Roman universities of which we hear so much in the pages of Ausonius and Sidonius were no more than a memory. The monastic schools of Lérins, S. Victor at Marseilles, and Marmoutier near Tours no longer produced theologians and scholars like the men who, in the fifth century, had passed from the cell to bishop's throne. Not only were there few scholar-bishops, but the average of instruction had fallen through the whole order, and many dioceses were ruled by prelates of little learning. Yet there was a proportion of instructed men, and a small number to whom the epithet of learned might still be applied. The level had not yet sunk so low as it was destined to do in the times when Charles Martel rewarded his fighting men with sees, and many bishops knew more of training horses, dogs, and falcons than of directing the souls of men.

Great as had been the decline since Gaul in the fourth century had excelled Italy in education, there is some evidence for the survival of sparks in the ashes, not so easily to be extinguished; from Gregory and Fortunatus we glean certain facts which seem to make here and there for continuity in Latin teaching. Desiderius (Didier) of Vienne, a worthy successor of Avitus,[1] actually gave lectures in grammar, and read the Latin poets with young men of the city. His reputation for secular learning reached the ears of Pope Gregory the Great, who rebuked him, in a letter, for such misguided activities.[2] His devotion to secular studies may have been one cause of his banishment from his see in 603 by the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône, before which he was accused by Aredius. A certain Bertram, perhaps the bishop of Le Mans rather than King Guntram's relative, wrote poems which excited remark for their bombast and elaboration.[1] Sulpicius, a man of senatorial family elected bishop of Bourges in 584, was evidently brought up in the old Roman tradition; Gregory praises him as one second to none in his knowledge of rhetoric and poetry (VI. 30). The subtle Andarchius began his extraordinary career as the literary slave of a senatorial named Felix. As such he managed to educate himself, gaining familiarity with the works of Virgil, and with the Theodosian Code, as well as learning arithmetic.[2] Secundinus and Asteriolus, royal favourites, are described as 'learned men, and versed in rhetoric',[3] which would seem to imply that they had some knowledge of Roman letters. Jovinus, governor of Provence, exchanged epistles in verse with Fortunatus. These examples show that Fortunatus (p. 81) was not alone upon his eminence, and that when he crossed the Alps, to become the model of Gallo-Roman and Frankish society, he did not find his new country quite denuded of the old literary accomplishments.[4] A reputation for superior culture even characterized a whole society. The town of Avignon seems

---

[1] Avitus, bishop of Vienne, was not only a Latin poet, but a punctilious scholar. One of his letters is addressed to a *rhetor* who had accused him of saying *potĭtur* instead of *potītur*. Avitus defends himself at length, giving quotations from Virgil (M. G. H., *Auct. Antiquiss.* vi, Pt. I: *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti . . . Epistolae, Homiliae, Carmina*, ed. O. Seeck, Berlin, 1883, p. 85). Caesarius of Arles (d. 543) could also write respectable Latin.

[2] *Ep.* xi. 34. His studies were condemned as uncanonical. Queen Brunhild

---

actively supported the banishment of S. Didier, perhaps because he had presumed to censure her conduct; in 608, soon after his restoration to his see, she caused him to be put to death for repeating his rebuke (cf. p. 71).

[1] Even Fortunatus, himself often none too simple a writer, criticizes them on these grounds. He speaks of *ardua epigrammata* and of *cothurnato verba rotata sopho*, adding, by way of climax, the following vivid simile:

Plana procellosos ructavit pagina fluctus. (*Carm.* iii. 18.)

[2] IV. 32(46): *ad studia litterarum cum eo positus, bene institutus emicuit. Nam de operibus Virgilii, legis Theodosiani libris, artemque calcoli ad plenum eruditus est.*

[3] III. 33. Their culture did not prevent them from pursuing, with unseemly violence, a feud which caused the murder of Asteriolus. Secundinus was remorselessly pursued by the dead man's son, and to avoid being murdered in his turn, made an end to his own life.

[4] Venantius Fortunatus was the product of the last forcing-house of ancient letters in Italy, the Schools of Ravenna. Both Theodoric the Ostrogoth and the Emperor Justinian had maintained chairs of Grammar and Rhetoric; Justinian even reopened the university of Rome (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 78). Fortunatus delighted in the old tags and purple patches; he could do the old metrical tricks and even write *versus echoici*:

Frater amore Dei digno memorabilis actu
Pectore fixe meo, frater amore Dei, &c., &c.

Pursuing triviality along newer lines, he wrote several acrostic poems. But he compensated for these things in some degree by a few great hymns, by his elegy on Galswinth, and by his poem on the ruin of Thuringia, written for Brunhild.

to have been famed for its intellectual tone. When the holy abbot Domnolus was to be made a bishop by Lothar I, the king proposed Avignon to him; but Domnolus begged that he might not be sent to that see, and that the king 'would not suffer him to be quizzed in his simplicity by sophistic senatorials and philosophic counts';[1] his place, he said, would be one of humiliation rather than of honour. Roman culture naturally lingered longest in the extreme south.

As to the Frankish laymen the vast majority were illiterate, and after Charibert, who is praised by Fortunatus as a Latin scholar,[2] the eccentric Chilperic is said to have been the only king who showed any interest in letters. To attempt, as Chilperic did, the composition of Latin verse, even though the feet limped and the lines halted (p. 65), was in itself a remarkable achievement for a Frank in this age. Many high-born Franks, unless in their youth they had been trained at court,[3] or, like Bertram, they entered the Church, were probably unable to write their names, relying wholly upon signets.

The nature of the education given to the more favoured among those preparing to enter the Church may be presumed from that received by Gregory himself (p. 65). It was probably not very different from that of Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, his own ancestor, whose mother sent him as a boy to be instructed 'in ecclesiastical letters'.[4] Restricted though such a course may appear, it must have offered a far wider scope than that open to the less fortunate. Many of the best servants of the Church entered upon their career with little more than a smattering of common knowledge and a familiarity with certain parts of the Bible, especially the Psalms. But even so, inasmuch as they were probably taught to write, they were better educated than the Frankish aristocracy upon whom the destinies of the country so largely depended. Leobardus of Auvergne, who afterwards became a recluse, learned psalms at school with other boys; when he withdrew from the world he prepared vellum and occupied himself with copying (V. P. xx). Brachio, a young Frank of position, converted by the hermit S. Aemilianus, committed the whole Psalter to memory (V. P. xii. 2). In the cathedral cities there were schools which ensured provision of lower clerics educated enough to act as choristers; we have Gregory's statement as to the teaching at Lyons under the patronage of the above-mentioned Nicetius (V. P. viii. 2). There must also have been higher instruction for those proceeding to holy orders, though we are given no detail as to the way in which it was imparted. The career of the dissolute cleric mentioned on another page (p. 282) is of interest in connexion with schools maintained by the Church. Aetherius, bishop of Lisieux, having obtained the release from prison of a cleric of tarnished reputation, accepted his statement that he was a teacher of letters,[1] collected the boys of the city, and entrusted them to his care. Here the simple affirmation of the would-be teacher seems to have qualified him for a post, the tenure of which he grossly abused (VI. *36*). We find evidence that the clergy sought to establish schools when a teacher could be obtained, but those capable of giving instruction were few; in most cases they must themselves have been the teachers. The archdeacon of Arles had children taught in his archdeaconry.[2] Nunnio, a man venerated by Childebert I, taught boys their letters at Néris (Allier).[3]

---

[1] VI. 9: *nec permitteret simplicitatem illius inter senatores sophisticos ac iudices philosophicos fatigari.* The word *iudices* probably means counts, for the words *iudex* and *comes* are often interchangeable. Domnolus was finally made bishop of Le Mans.

[2] The praise must be discounted. Fortunatus says (*Carm.* vi. 4):

Cum sis progenitus clara de gente Sygamber,
Floret in eloquio lingua latina tuo.
Qualis es in propria docto sermone loquela,
Qui nos Romanos vincis in eloquio?

Fortunatus also praises the accomplishments of Gogo and Magnulf.

[3] M. Prou, *La Gaule mérov.*, p. 46.

[4] *Litteris ecclesiasticis mandavit institui* (V. P. viii. 1).

Fragmentary though it may be, the evidence of the foregoing paragraphs suggests that education had not everywhere fallen to the elementary standard of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It yet kept a higher level in a few cultivated houses, while the foundations of a religious training still remained. The action taken by an English prince less than fifty years after Gregory's death would seem to presuppose such conditions. Sigibert, king of the East Angles, who before his accession had passed some years in Gaul, was so anxious, after succeeding to the throne, to imitate in his own country the institutions which he had seen abroad, that he founded a school where young East Anglians might be instructed in letters.[1] It has been noted on another page (p. 189) that Anglo-Saxon princes and princesses were in the seventh century sent to be brought up in the monasteries of Gaul; and though the instruction received must have been chiefly religious it may well have carried with it some elements of literature. The vestiges of Latin culture had been overlaid but not wholly obliterated by the Frankish occupation.

---

[1] *Profert se litterarum esse doctorem, promittens sacerdoti quod, si ei pueros delegaret, perfectos hic in litteris redderet.*

[2] *In archidiaconatu suo studium docendi parvulos habens* (G. M. 77).

[3] V. P. ix. 1: *Pueros erudire coepit in studiis litterarum.*

A word may be said as to the position of Gaul compared with that of neighbouring countries. The example of Fortunatus has shown that education on the late-Roman model survived in the north of Italy until the coming of the Lombards; after that time culture probably declined in the Ravenna of the Exarchs. Under Theodoric the Great it must have been fostered, since it was the aim of this prince to maintain Roman tradition. The Gothic wars and the Lombard invasion left Rome the one centre of letters in Italy, but the greatest of the Romans did not often encourage the study of pure literature; Pope Gregory had small respect for it. Theological learning predominated over all, but some leaven of the old Roman tradition must have been preserved. In Spain education may have held a higher place than in the other Teutonic countries. Whatever may have been the case with the Visigothic people, and the Hispano-Romans over whom they ruled, the Visigothic court at Toledo was probably more cultured than that of any Merovingian kingdom. Fortunatus may well have given the princess Brunhild no more than her due when he praised her accomplishments in his poem on her marriage with Sigibert (p. 69).[2] The Burgundian court, before the Frankish conquest, must also have been less barbarous than those of Gaul; Vienne, the city of Avitus, lay within its borders, and Avitus was a counsellor of the king. The princess Clotild, whom Clovis made his queen, need not have been learned; but in his account of her arguments with her husband before his conversion Gregory seems to imply that she knew something of Roman mythology (II. 20 (29)), and this she may have learned through a smattering of Latin. England, before the coming of Augustine, had been overwhelmed by the pagan Anglo-Saxons, and was not destined to recover until after the death of Gregory of Tours, when the Northumbrians had learned from Ireland and from Rome, and the school of York gave Alcuin to the France of Charles the Great.

---

[1] Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 18.

[2] The praises of Cassiodorus to the Ostrogothic queen, Amalasuntha, may be recalled: *Romani eloquii pompa resplendet; nativi sermonis ubertate gloriatur*, she needs no interpreter (*Var.* xi. 1).

The Western country which best preserved the flame of knowledge was the remote but undevastated island to which Patrick had brought Christianity in the fifth century. Ireland, by a fortunate immunity from invasion, had preserved in peace the treasure of learning first obtained from the earlier Gaul, where Patrick himself and other Celtic saints had received their training. The time was near when the Irish were to repay their debt. The great missionary Columban (cf. p. 368) had landed in Gaul before Gregory died. He had first been taught at the school of S. Sinell on an island of Lough Erne, and had continued his studies at the monastery of Bangor on Belfast Lough.[1] He arrived at the court of Sigibert towards 575, two years after Gregory became bishop of Tours. He was learned both in the secular and theological writers; his sermons prove him to have been familiar with classical models, and he wrote Latin verses. Though his influence in Gaul was moral rather than literary, his example cannot have been without effect during his long sojourn in the country; the opposition which he encountered must, however, have reduced his influence in this direction.

Education in Merovingian Gaul could but shelter itself where any protection could be found from the violence and insecurity of the age. Until the feuds and wars of the seventh and early eighth centuries had given place to the ordered empire of Charles the Great a few bishops or monks, and a few referendaries and ‘senatorials’ might keep alive some reminiscence of the older learning; but where primary education itself was neglected, the higher studies could only be pursued by few and favoured persons. The State was indifferent, the Church preoccupied; there was no organization, no expenditure upon instruction. If a man succeeded in advancing beyond the rudiments, there were few careers in which his education might further his advancement.

---

[1] Jonas, *Vita Columbani*. For Jonas of Susa, monk at Bobbio, see S. A. Bennett in *Dict. Chr. Biography*.

b. Science: Medicine.

In sixth-century Gaul science was mainly confined to medicine. There was a slight knowledge of astronomy, acquired rather for ecclesiastical purposes than from any abstract love of learning. The nocturnal offices of the Church were regulated by the rising or setting of certain stars at certain seasons. Gregory's own treatise *De cursu Stellarum* (p. 372) was written to explain how the hours of these services were to be determined by the rising and setting of constellations at different seasons of the year; astronomy was also important for the determination of certain movable feasts. Referring to the famous dispute between the Celtic and Roman Churches about Easter, S. Columban said: 'The Irish are better astronomers than you Romans.'[1] But by most persons the movements of stars were of interest as affecting the destinies of individuals; men's minds were inclined rather towards astrology than astronomy, and in ordinary life the starry heaven was regarded with most interest as the proper field of portents. The entrance of a fifth star into the circle of the moon was held by Gregory to presage the death of Theudebald (IV. 6 (9)). Whenever a comet appeared, it was feared as the sign of disaster to a country or a king.[2] The astronomy of Alexandria was forgotten; science and divination were confused.[3]

The one province of knowledge which preserved a scientific character was the study and practice of medicine. It is difficult to form a clear idea of the state of medical science in Gaul during the sixth century. We may arrive at some notion of the aims which it pursued by considering the general conditions of practice in the civilized world at this time. The true medicine of the Dark Ages has been described as Greek medicine derived through Latin channels. It is singularly constant in character, whether it comes from Southern Italy, the Rhine, Switzerland, or Gaul. Greek works had been translated into

---

[1] Letter to Pope Boniface. In the eighth century the Irish monk Virgilius reaffirmed the claim by maintaining the existence of the Antipodes.

[2] Various instances of such portents are mentioned in the History.

[3] It may be mentioned in the present place that there seems to be an instance of 'dowsing' in X. 29. Aredius (S. Yrieix) is described as obtaining water by causing a wand to rotate in his hands: *defixit virgam in terram quam manu gerebat eamque cum bis aut ter(tio) in gyro vertisset, ad se laetus extraxit, moxque unda secuta est.* Gregory regards the performance as a miracle.

Latin in Italy as early as the fifth century, including those of Dioscorides and Galen;[1] other works incorporating Greek material, but adding local superstitious practices, were now composed in the West in the Latin of the later empire. Thus, the true medicine was corrupted by the admixture of magical elements, which in Gaul were probably both Teutonic and Celtic. Teutonic magic and medicine were characterized by four characteristic elements: the doctrine of specific venoms; the doctrine of the nines; the doctrine of the worm as the cause of disease; and the doctrine of the elf-shot.[2] The venoms, or poisons creating disease, were regarded as flying influences, blown upon the body by the winds; there were believed to be nine venoms and nine diseases. Early Teutonic magic had no faith in 'possession'. Hurt came to man through the arrows of external supernatural beings, elves, smiths, or witches, whose shafts were shot at the sufferer;[3] such shafts might be easily confused with the flying venoms. The doctrine of possession by demons as a cause of disease was originally derived from Babylonia and Assyria, but was adopted by Christianity, and existed side by side with its Greek inheritance of true medicine. It came into the West with Christianity;[4] it was neither a Celtic nor a Teutonic belief. Exorcism followed belief in possession. It is natural that in the mind of an ecclesiastic like Gregory the 'possession' theory of disease should be prominent.

In the Roman Empire, where medicine was gradually changed through the introduction of Greek science, schools or colleges of medicine were established, with a central place of conference in Rome under a president bearing the title *archiatrus* or

---

[1] Dr. C. Singer, *Proc. of the British Academy*, 1919–20, p. 346. Galen's works reached the West at an early period (between the close of the fourth century and the seventh) through abstracts or summaries translated into Latin, though his best and most scientific writings were not known. The valuable Aphorisms of Hippocrates were translated probably before, but certainly not after, the sixth century (C. Singer, in *The Legacy of Greece*, ed. by R. W. Livingstone, 1923, p. 230). But superstitious and astrological works circulated under the name of Hippocrates. 'The Greeks had inherited . . . a whole system of magical or non-rational pharmacy and medicine from a remote ancestry. Such things, when they appear in later Greek writings, represent more primitive folk-elements working up, under the influence of social disintegration and consequent mental deterioration, through the upper strata of the literate Greek world' (*ibid.*, p. 204).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

[4] The large part played in the early dissemination of Christianity by Greeks and Syrians must be remembered in this connexion.

archiater (ἀρχιάτρευς). Such schools spread to Gaul and Spain; they were founded at Marseilles, Arles, Nîmes, Lyons, and Saragossa, and produced numbers of 'general practitioners', a large proportion of whom were Greeks and orientals. District physicians, also given the title of *archiater* or *archiatrus*, were appointed in the provinces, as in Italy, taking up their quarters in the large towns. Their main duty was to attend the poor, and in the Code of Justinian (A. D. 533) they are exhorted to give this service in a willing spirit, and not to devote themselves merely to the rich.[1] *Xenodochia* were maintained in Gaul (p. 347), and the doctors attended the sick inmates.[2] An *archiater*[3] was called as a witness as to a charge brought by Clotild, the leader of the rebel nuns at Poitiers, against her abbess. In his evidence he stated that he had emasculated the man involved in the charge; he said that he had learned how to perform the operation from a surgeon in Constantinople.[4] The passage is important as showing that surgeons and doctors sometimes learned their practice in the Byzantine capital, though there had certainly been a regular medical service in Italy in the time of Theodoric the Ostrogoth. There was a 'Count of the physicians', the *formula* for whose appointment is given by Cassiodorus (*Var.* vi. 19). He is to advise and control the *archiatri*, who appear to have been contentious and given to much quarrelling. He has the entrée of the royal palace, and the right of exacting obedience from the king.[5]

---

[1] For the above see C. Singer, in *The Legacy of Rome*, pp. 281 ff. Inscriptions prove the existence of municipal *archiatri* in many Italian towns. As to Gaul we may suppose that Armentarius at Tours (V. S. M. i), Reovalis, and Marileif at Poitiers, occupied this position, though the latter had at one time been a royal physician. Armentarius, failing to cure Gregory of a sickness, is scornfully apostrophized by the bishop, who always preferred miracle to science: *Omnem ingenium artificii tui impendisti, pigmentorum omnium vim iam probasti, sed nihil proficit perituro res saeculi* (V. S. M. ii. 1).

The title of *archiater* seems also to have been given to all court physicians (Ducange, s.v.).

[2] Cf. H. Leclercq in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, article *Hôpitaux*, § iv. Caesarius had founded a hospital at Arles (*Vita*, ch. 20).

[3] This man may have been Marileif or Reovalis. If the former, it was after his tenure of office as Chilperic's chief physician (*primus medicorum*). Reovalis had become a priest, and had he been the man, we might have expected Gregory to mention the fact.

[4] X. 15. The abbess was accused of immoral relations with this man, who went about, and appeared in the court, dressed as a woman. When examined he said that since he had been robbed of his manhood he thought it best to wear women's clothes (*dixit se nihil opus possc virile agere, ideoque sibi hoc indumentum mutasse*).

[5] *Ut inter salutis magistros solus habearis eximius, et omnes iudicio tuo*

The lot of the medical man in Merovingian Gaul was unenviable for several reasons. Every deceased saint of repute was a rival; so were many living holy persons qualifying for sainthood by austere lives. Less respectable competitors were the *harioli*, spell-binders and quacks, who went about the country tempting the ignorant to try their remedies.[1] Every failure of the professional doctor was bitterly censured, while those of the saint could generally be explained away.[2] The greater saints of the past, like Martin and Julian, must have robbed the profession of many fees and brought upon doctors humiliations often undeserved. The nature of their intervention is well illustrated by episodes which show us Gregory himself as patient. After denouncing Armentarius in the manner above mentioned for failing to effect a cure, he proceeded to take the famous *potio de pulvere sepulchri*. When professional treatment did not bring quick relief from toothache, he sang the praise of this same potion, and inveighed against the vain subtleties of doctors (*medicorum argutiae*).[3] He tells how Leunast, archdeacon of Bourges, a sufferer from cataract, having tried the doctors in vain, resorted to the church of S. Martin at Tours, where after three months of assiduous

---

cedant qui se ambitu mutuae contentionis excruciant. . . . Fas est tibi nos fatigare ieiuniis, fas est contra nostrum sentire desiderium, et in locum beneficii dictare quod nos ad gaudia salutis excruciet. Talem tibi denique licentiam nostri esse cognoscis, qualem nos habere non probemur in ceteris. The physicians of Merovingian courts appear also to have lived on familiar terms with the king and his great officers. 'Fredegar' (iv. 27) tells us that one Peter, an *archiater*, was playing a board-game with Protadius, Brunhild's favourite minister, in the tent of King Theuderic of Burgundy.

[1] The believers in relics and in the transference of saintly power actively opposed the *harioli*, but they did not help the doctors. In V. S. M. i. 26 we read of a certain Aquilinus, seized with panic while hunting with his father: *parentes vero . . . ut mos rusticorum habet, a sortilegis et hariolis ligamenta ei et potiones deferebant.*

[2] On the case mentioned in the previous note, Gregory comments that the *harioli* should be avoided, 'for they are no use to the sick'. The conclusion naturally is that the *potio de pulvere sepulchri* is alone effectual: *plus enim valet parumper de pulvere basilicae quam illi cum medicamentis insaniae.* We may compare the case in which Eustenia, Gregory's niece, interferes with the treatment of a case undertaken by the *harioli* (V. S. M. v. 36). Here again the substitute is not science but faith. When a man who had been treated by the doctors for cataract receives his sight at the 'cell' of S. Martin at Candes, Gregory tilts openly against the profession: *quid unquam tale fecere cum ferramentis medici, cum plus negotium doloriexserant quam medellae, cum distentum transfixumque spiculis oculum prius mortis tormenta figurant quam lumen aperiant? In quo, si cautela fefellerit, aeternam misero praeparant caecitatem* (V. S. M. ii. 19).

[3] V. S. M. ii. 1.

prayer and fasting, he recovered his sight.[1] Unfortunately, on returning home, he was not satisfied with the mercy vouchsafed, but thought to improve upon it by calling in a Jewish doctor, who applied cupping glasses. Whereupon the darkness came upon him again by his own fault, as Gregory insists, basing his argument upon texts from SS. Matthew, John, and Paul. The attitude of the bishop of Tours was very different from that of his contemporary Gregory the Great, who, though an equal believer in miracles, did not hesitate to recommend the Roman physicians to his sick friends.[2] His books on the Fathers and Confessors of Gaul are full of tales of miraculous cure of every mortal ill, from paralysis or a fractured thigh[3] to toothache.[4] Sometimes a contemporary person of great holiness was credited with a *virtus* like that of the saints of old. Such persons effected cures by prayer, aided on occasion by simple remedies. S. Senoch cured persons bitten by snakes.[5] S. Monigund of Chartres settled at Tours, where, in the church of S. Martin, she cured the sick by applications of leaves and by prayer.[6] Such half-medical saints must all have been competitors for the doctors, who had only at command the remedies of this present world.

Graver than mere competition to the brave practitioners of the time were the risks of bodily harm or even death at the hands of the ignorant and violent Franks, or their relations. The court doctors who failed to cure Guntram's detestable queen, Theudechild, were denounced by her on her death-bed;

---

[1] V. 6: *Qui, cum per multos medicos ambulans, nihil omnino visiones recipere possit, accessit ad basilicam Sancti Martini.*

[2] Pope Gregory consulted his doctors on the case of his friend Marinianus, bishop of Ravenna, who may have had consumption, giving him their advice by letter (F. H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, i, p. 442). On another occasion he urged the bishop of Arles to visit Rome in order that he might take advantage of the skilled medical treatment to be obtained there.

[3] One Gundulf fractured his femur by falling out of an apple-tree; he was miraculously cured by S. Martin. What is more, his other leg, afterwards crushed by a horse, was cured in the same way (V. M. iii. 15).

[4] G. C. 93. The wattle twigs from the old covering of the tomb of S. Médard at Soissons were used to cure toothache. A man laid a toothpick cut by himself on the venerated tomb of a consecrated virgin near Paris, and by the use of this his pain was cured: *factaque hastula una de parte acuta, ut in humanis usibus ad purgandos dentes fieri solet*, &c. (*ibid.* 103).

[5] V. P. xv. 31.

[6] G. C. 24. She cured quartan ague, sore-throat, dysentery, and other ills. A female servant of the archdeacon of Tours, placed on this saint's tomb, was healed of fever.

almost with her latest breath she exacted a promise from the king that if she died her doctors should be sent after her to the grave, a promise which was but too loyally fulfilled (V. 27 (35)). The physicians who failed to save the life of King Theudebert, after a long sickness, probably passed some anxious hours.[1] And it was perhaps fortunate for those of Chilperic's court that Fredegund was the stepmother and not the mother of his son Theuderic, who died of dysentery (VI. 24 (33)).[2] Very different from the lot of these court doctors in the Merovingian kingdoms, liable to be robbed and even to lose their lives, was that of the medical men living in Italy earlier in the sixth century under the more enlightened Theodoric. When a certain *archiater*, named John, suffered an injustice, the king ordered the wrong to be righted on the ground that no 'uncivic' action should be tolerated against one who worked day by day for the public weal.[3]

Royal physicians serving wicked kings or queens could sometimes only keep their posts at the cost of moral degeneration. Queen Fredegund, after causing Praetextatus, bishop of Rouen, to be stabbed in his cathedral church, went to his bedside and offered him the services of her most skilful court doctors.[4] As there is no evidence of any repentance on her part, it is only too probable that these doctors would have been called upon to complete the work which the assassin had clumsily failed to achieve at the first attempt. This queen had the subtlety required for an action of this kind, and as to her unscrupulous and merciless use of her medical men, the following episode provides sufficient evidence. Her enemy Leudast, with a terrible wound which laid bare the greater part of his head, and a broken tibia, was committed to the care of the royal doctors.[5] This happened too late; his wounds festered, and he lived only just long enough to allow the queen to wreak her vengeance upon him (VI. 23 (32)). Were the royal physicians entrusted with the case that Leudast might be permanently cured? Not so. The object of this medical care was simply to restore the unhappy man's strength to render him capable of undergoing slow torture. There were, however, a few material compensations in this dangerous career, though they were precarious. If a royal doctor managed to survive his service, he evidently made a good thing of his practice. When Guntram's partisans entered Poitiers in 585 they made a special attack on Marileif, who had been formerly physician in Chilperic's household;[1] 'they took his horses, his gold, and silver, and the best of the valuable things in his possession'; he had already been relieved of much property, so that he now had no substance left.[2] As the doctor's parents and relatives had been servants on church property, he was now reduced to the condition which the spoilers regarded as proper to his birth. The successful royal physician was clearly a man of substance.

---

[1] III. 36: *Ad quem medici multa studia impenderunt; sed nihil valuit.*

[2] Though on the death of her own sons she certainly admitted the wrath of God as the primary cause.

[3] Cassiodorus, *Var.* iv. 41: *quia nihil fieri volumus incivile, cuius cottidianus labor est pro generali quiete tractare.*

[4] VIII. 31: *Sunt apud nos peritissimi medici qui hunc vulnere mederi possint.*

[5] VI. 23 (32).

The great scourge of Europe in the sixth century was the bubonic plague (*lues inguinaria*). This terrible epidemic was first professionally described by the physician Rufus of Ephesus in the second century A. D.,[3] though Thucydides had given the wonderful account in the second book of his History five hundred years before. Agathias and Procopius both relate the visitations of the sixth century, and Gibbon's description in his forty-third chapter is based upon the latter historian. It is mentioned many times by Gregory,[4] and had been recurrent in Gaul since the first half of the century. It is interesting to note that, after the example of the Israelites, the people marked the walls of houses and churches at Clermont with the *signum tau* while the plague was raging.[5] The great visitation during which this occurred took place in 571; it was known as *clades Arverna*, and is so called by Gregory. The people died 'by legions'. When coffins and planks ran short, ten or more dead were buried in a single fosse. One Sunday, in the basilica of S. Peter, three hundred victims were counted lying dead. The disease spread from groin or armpit 'like a snake', and those attacked died on the second or third day, losing their wits in their agony (IV. 24 (31)). Narbonne was attacked by the plague in 582 (VI. 8 (14)), and Marseilles in 587, the disease passing north into the Lyonnais (IX. 21). It was brought to Marseilles by a trading vessel from Spain, and raged fiercely for two months, most of the population leaving the city. It then seemed to cease; but on the return of many people broke out once more. Even after this there were several recurrences of the pestilence. In 590–1 it was at Marseilles, Angers, Nantes, and Le Mans (X. 23, 24). The plague is said not to have spared even the animals, and to have attacked both cattle and deer (X. 30).

---

[1] VII. 25: *primus medicorum in domo Chilperici regis.*

[2] *Equos quoque eius, aurum argentumque sive species quas meliores habebat, pariter auferentes.* Marileif had been previously robbed by order of Merovech, when the prince was in sanctuary at Tours (V. 8). On that occasion Gregory provided him with suitable clothing, and sent him on to Poitiers.

[3] C. Singer in *The Legacy of Greece*, as above, p. 241. The plague began in Egypt, passed thence to Syria and Persia, and then turned westward into Europe. For the *pestilentiae lues* in England in the seventh century see Plummer's note to Bede's *Hist. Eccl.* iii, ch. 27.

[4] H. F. iv. 5; x. 1, 23, 24, 30; G. M. 50; V. P. vi. 6. In 590 the plague had carried off Pope Pelagius, predecessor of Gregory the Great (X. 1).

[5] *Signata atque caraxata*, G. M. 50; H. F. iv. 5; see the note on the second of these passages.

What Gregory describes as *dysentericus morbus* also reached the proportions of an epidemic. The sons of Chilperic and Fredegund were attacked, after the king himself had recovered.[1] Despite the panic-stricken repentance of Fredegund, and her burning of the registers from cities belonging to her, both of the boys died (V. 26, 34).

Leprosy took its toll of the people (G. M. 18), and lepers must have been seen in many parts of the country; the conditions must have been similar to those obtaining in the later Middle Ages, but the means to cope with it less developed. The prevalence of dirt and debauchery must have caused the diffusion of various diseases of the skin.

Remittent fevers were widespread through the country, and are so often mentioned that it is unnecessary to cite examples; in his younger days, Gregory himself had been a sufferer (p. 7).[2] General insanitary conditions and the large extent of uncultivated and marshy land must have aggravated the disease. Epilepsy was frequent and there is mention of cases which suggest paralysis.[3] The 'possessed' (*energumeni*) may have been in part the victims of nervous maladies.

Gout was common among the higher orders, whether ecclesiastical or lay.[4] Gregory's father was clearly a gouty subject (p. 4), tortured by the *infirmitas humoris podagrici*.[1] Guntram, as we should expect from so convivial a character, suffered often from gout. In 591 he was prevented from at once proceeding to Paris to act as godfather to Fredegund's boy Lothar, by what may be presumed to have been an attack.[2] At the time of the mutiny in the monastery at Poitiers the Abbess Leubovera was unable to walk, through gout.[3] Maurilius, bishop of Cahors, was also a sufferer; but he was apparently one who desired a fuller mortification. Not content with the natural pain of the disease, he applied a red-hot iron to his legs and feet, purposely to increase his torment.[4] The malady of the legs with which Felix, bishop of Nantes, was afflicted, dying after the application of a powerful cantharides plaster,[5] was perhaps of some other kind. Among other painful diseases may be mentioned the stone, of which Domnolus, bishop of Le Mans, died.[6] There are many allusions to people suffering from 'contraction' (*contractio*). It is difficult always to assign this drawn condition of the limbs to any one specific cause; the word may often have a general meaning: maimed or lamed. The differentiation of disease had not been carried far in these early times; words like dysentery, which to us have a precise significance, may in the sixth century have been much more vaguely applied, covering other affections for which we should have specific terms.

---

[1] V. 26 (34). The symptoms rather suggest smallpox. Cf. S. Dill, *Roman Soc. in Gaul in the Merov. Age*, p. 260.

[2] In the Life of S. Radegund by Fortunatus, the queen is said to have tended and even embraced lepers. We gather that lepers were already isolated. Cf. p. 347 above.

[3] IV. 6 (9): King Theudebald may have been paralysed: *valde infirmatus, a cinctura deorsum se iudicare non poterat.*

[4] F. H. Dudden (*Gregory the Great*, i, p. 243). Pope Gregory, the most

Affections of the eyes were doubtless numerous, especially in

---

abstemious of men, was a martyr to gout, though it is true that he drank an Alexandrian wine called *cognidium*.

[1] The sufferings of Gregory's father are thus described: *Accenditur febris, intumescunt pedes, dolore pessimo nervos intorquet. Haec perferente, dum magno gemitu in strato decumberet*, &c. (G. C. 39). We may note here the expression *humoris podagrici*. In the early Middle Ages all illnesses were regarded as disturbances of four 'humours': blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile, connected respectively with the heart, the brain, the spleen, and the liver. When the four humours maintained their proper relation to each other, a 'good complexion', or well-balanced state of health, resulted.

[2] X. 28: *pedum est dolore proibitus.*

[3] X. 15: *ad Sanctae crucis arcam se portare poposcit; gravabatur enim dolore humoris podagrici.*

[4] V. 42: *graviter aegrotabat ab humore podagrico; sed super hos dolores quos ipse humor commovit magnos sibi cruciatus addebat; non saepe candentem ferrum tibiis ac pedibus defigebat, quo facilius cruciatum sibi amplius adderet.*

[5] VI. 15: *Sed postquam febris discessit, tibiae eius ab humore pustulas emerserunt. Tunc cantaredarum cataplasmam nimium validam ponens, computrescentibus tibiis, . . . aetate septuagenaria vitam finivit* (in 582).

[6] VI. 9. He appears also to have suffered from jaundice (*morbus regius*).

the south of Gaul. There are several allusions to cataract in Gregory's works.

In a country where violence was so common, and accidents were not less frequent than elsewhere, there must have been wide scope for surgery. We do not gain much detailed information; mention has been made of a fractured tibia (VI. 23 (32)); but when we read of the brawls and battles in which innumerable injuries were inflicted, it is clear that the surgeon must have been well employed. The many victims of torture must also have required the surgeons' care in those cases in which they survived.

Common remedies actually mentioned by Gregory include cupping, cauterizing, and the application of plasters. Fortunatus (*Carm.* vi. 12) tells how one very hot summer he was bled in the arm, and thereby prevented from using his pen.[1] We hear little or nothing of the simples made from herbs, which must have been in constant use.

c. The Arts.

We do not, from any of his writings, receive the impression that Gregory was a man susceptible to artistic impressions, he mentions works of art only when they come in his way; he does not feel that art in itself has real importance in life. We suspect that had Gaul in his day passed through a great creative period, his allusions would have been very much what they are, incidental, and betraying no interest or enthusiasm. For him, the business of art was to enrich churches and the Christian cult.

In an unsettled age it was natural that what we call the major arts should have lagged behind the rest. Architecture, sculpture, and painting were not dead, but they were restricted by conditions too hard for healthy growth. The sixth century, which witnessed the establishment of Frankish rule throughout Gaul, was the century in which, at the other end of Europe, Santa Sophia was built and adorned. In the East Roman Empire there were present the advantages which Gaul lacked, a survival of fine traditions, a strong influx of new theory and practice, rulers eager to encourage, artists and corporations of craftsmen to be encouraged, the intelligent use of wealth, and, above all, the internal tranquillity maintained by a civilized state. In Merovingian Gaul there was small prospect for the greater arts. Even the larger ecclesiastical buildings were relatively small (p. 326) ; the mosaics and paintings which decorated their interiors were the work of unknown men ; such sculpture as survived found few patrons.

---

[1] For bleeding in seventh-century England see Bede's *Hist. Eccl.* v, ch. 3 and Plummer's note.

Yet it would be an error to suppose that the art of which Gregory shows slight appreciation had no vitality and no historical importance. On the contrary, in many ways it must have been more interesting and more original than that of the late-Roman provincial art which it displaced. Instead of local versions of an art in which the principle of growth was dead, the subjects of Clovis and his descendants witnessed the penetration of the West by those vigorous Syrian and Iranian influences which in the East had given so new and foreign a style to Christian art. Their architecture may have moved on old lines, uninvigorated by the experiments succeeding each other with so much brilliance at the opposite end of the Mediterranean.[1] But it is probable that in its interior decoration they saw applied new methods of representation and ornament, developing on lines other than those of the old Gallo-Roman art, and, if rude, possessing more vitality and strength. Long before Clovis had conquered Aquitaine, the Visigoths had aided in bringing in the new oriental ideas. It is now believed that Sarmatian craftsmen probably accompanied the Goths when they moved west from the south of Russia at the end of the fourth century ;[2] while Syrians and Armenians coming into the country through the port of Marseilles certainly brought with them new ideas of religious representation, as well as works of art illustrating their practical expression. Gregory of Tours and his contemporaries may well have had before their eyes paintings in the Syro-Hellenistic style[3] at the time prevalent in Antioch and other East-Christian cities. Certainly they often looked upon the rich gemmed decoration of much church plate and of jewels worn by the rich, the style of which had been transmitted from North Iranian sources. Let us beware, therefore, of underestimating an art quickened by new ideas, an art which had already found in King Chilperic an eager patron, and was soon to be distinguished by the fine craftsmanship of S. Éloi.

---

[1] Strzygowski has maintained that vaulted construction in Gaul was reintroduced by Iranian builders who accompanied the Goths westward, and by the pupils and descendants of such men. The buildings having almost all disappeared, the evidence is slender, and the theory is widely contested.

[2] M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, ch. viii. The Alans (p. 172) were Sarmatians.

[3] Dalton, *East Christian Art* (1925), pp. 8–10, 62–3. Some paintings may have come from Rome ; but there also Syrian influence was strong.

With this caution we may notice some of the various works of art and craft mentioned by Gregory and his contemporary Fortunatus.[1]

Of sculpture we learn hardly anything. Pagan statues are noticed, but only as antique, and in order that pleasure may be expressed as to their destruction. Marble sarcophagi are recorded, but they too are relics of past centuries, re-employed in later times.[2] We do not hear of any contemporary marble-worker like the Armenian, Daniel, whose workshop was so productive at Ravenna in the days of Theodoric the Great; there is little evidence for a surviving activity in the sculture of sarcophagi in Merovingian Gaul. We cannot say that the school which produced these at Toulouse under the Visigothic kings any longer existed.[3] Wood-carving was executed, and we can hardly doubt that such work as that which produced the elaborate canopies over tombs and altars (p. 330) was of a decorative character. One of those who distinguished himself in such carving was Leo, bishop of Tours, who before his consecration to the see had won repute as a worker in wood, though perhaps on a smaller scale (III. 17, X. 31).[4] The woodwork of houses was sometimes decorative.[5]

The character of sculpture on a small scale is but imperfectly illustrated by a few gems, and by the coins which fortunately survive. No certain examples of Merovingian ivory-carving are known. Gregory makes no reference to hard stones cut in intaglio as signets, or in cameo.[1] But a certain number of Frankish examples have come down to us showing that such work continued to be done, though on a small scale and with little skill.[2] If we had to rely upon Gregory, we should know nothing about the nature of the Frankish coinage (p. 223). The fact need not be regretted from the artistic point of view, for if we accept the *solidus* of Theudebert, grandson of Clovis, Merovingian numismatic art is very barbarous ; and Theudebert's *sou* not only copies a type of Justinian, but may have been made in Italy (p. 223).[3]

---

[1] Buildings are noticed on pp. 318, 401.

[2] Two examples must suffice: Felix, bishop of Bourges, was laid in an old sarcophagus of Parian marble; the more recent lid placed on it by Bishop Sulpicius was of marble from Heraclea (G. C. 100). The blessed Lusor, living in the fourth century, had been buried in a Parian sarcophagus in a church of Berry (*ibid.* 90). Cf. also above, p. 329.

[3] Examples of these sarcophagi are in the Musée des Augustins at Toulouse. They are illustrated in E. Le Blant, *Sarcophages chrétiens de la Gaule*, and in other works on early Christian art. For oriental influence on Merovingian ornament cf. A. Marignan, as above, ii, p. 161, and his book on Louis Courajeod entitled: *Un historien de l'art français.*

[4] Cf. the poem by Fortunatus mentioned on p. 401.

Allusions to mural and other paintings contain interesting facts. The evidence given by Gregory alone suffices to show that the painting of religious figure-subjects both on church walls and on small panels was no rare exception in the Gaul of his time. We have already noticed (p. 327) the story of the wife of Bishop Namatius, seated in the church of S. Stephen erected by the bishop outside the walls of the city, with a book upon her knees, and delivering her instructions to the painters at work on the walls, who are executing ancient 'histories'.[4] Whether the book which she held was a Bible, an illuminated manuscript, or some kind of 'Painter's Manual', one thing is certain, that the painters must have been skilled men well acquainted with the typical modes of rendering each subject, and practised in the representation of the human figure. The unhappy pretender Gundovald had done work of this kind, though he may have achieved no more than ornamental design.[5]

---

[1] He mentions that a referendary held the signet ring of the king, wherewith to seal documents ; but we cannot be sure that the device was not cut in the metal of the ring as in the case of the signet of Childeric found at Tournai (E. Babelon, *Hist. de la gravure sur gemmes en France*, p. 4).

[2] Those most familiar are fixed to such objects as the large cross at Brescia, or the reliquary at S. Maurice d'Agaune, in the Valais. For Merovingian and Carolingian gems see E. Babelon, as above, ch. i. Gems were also imitated by coloured glass pastes, as in Roman times.

[3] The Merovingians had Byzantine models in abundance, for not only did imperial gold coins circulate even after the time of Theudebert, but Byzantine medals came to Gaul as gifts. There was no desire to improve the numismatic standard ; King Chilperic might have attempted such a thing, but there is no evidence that he did so.

[4] *Quam (ecclesiam) cum fucis colorum adornare velit tenebat librum in sinum suum, legens historias actionis antiquas, pictoribus indicans, quae in parietibus fingere deberent.* Figure painting may be indicated in the description of the work on the elaborate ciborium erected in the cathedral at Clermont by Alcima and Placidina, sister and wife of Sidonius Apollinaris (G. M. 64 : *turrem ... erexerunt miram camerae fucorum diversitatibus imaginatam adhibentes picturam*).

[5] When he was besieged at Convenae, men of the investing army would

Fortunatus describes the mural paintings executed for Gregory in the *Ecclesia Turonica*, or cathedral church of Tours, restored by him soon after he succeeded to the bishopric.[1] Seven scenes are described: Martin cures a leper by a kiss; he divides his cloak, giving half to a beggar; he is next seen giving his tunic, whereupon his arms are miraculously covered with gems; he raises three men from the dead; he prevents a pine-tree from falling upon him by making the sign of the cross; idols which he wished to lay low are crushed by a great column launched from heaven; he exposes a pretended martyr. Work of this kind can only have been carried out by men of training and experience. Describing the church of S. Eutropius at Saintes, restored by Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux, Fortunatus speaks of painted walls, and a ceiling decorated with *ioci* (perhaps ornament of animals and monsters) in pierced wood.[2] He tells us that in the church built by Bishop Felix, at Nantes, the turret was painted with animal forms.[3] He further mentions a mural painting of birds eating grapes (*Carm.* iii. 17).

Panel pictures are described in a way which leaves little doubt as to their general character. The *locus classicus* [4] is that relating how Christ appeared in a vision at Narbonne, demanding to be clothed, in order that people might not look upon his nude form; after this a veil was hung before the picture, in the cathedral, which was only drawn aside for a few moments and then replaced. There is also the story of the Jew who transfixed and carried away one of the pictures painted on panels which the people were in the habit of fixing to the walls of churches and houses; it is to be presumed that this particular panel bore a figure of Our Lord, probably on the Cross.[5] This passage

---

come up to the walls and banter him: *Tune es pictor qui tempore Chlothacarii regis per oraturia parietes atque cameras caraxabas?* (VII. 36).

[1] *Carm.* x. 6:

Lucidius fabricam picturae pompa perornat,
Ductaque quae fucis, vivere membra putes.

[2] *Carm.* i. 13:

Hic scalptae camerae decus interrasile pendet,
Quos pictura solet, ligna dedere iocos,
Sumpsit imagineas paries simulando figuras,
Quae neque tecta prius, haec modo picta nitent.

[3] *Carm.* iii. 7:

Illic expositos fucis animantibus artus,
Vivere picturas arte reflante putes.

[4] G. M. 22.

[5] *Ibid.* 21: *imaginem in tabulis per ecclesias ac domos adfigunt.*

proves the custom of hanging sacred pictures. Such panels were probably carried in procession, as they must have been in Italy.[1]

We obtain no evidence from Gregory with regard to the illumination of manuscripts; it is probable that the book out of which the wife of Bishop Namatius instructed the decorators of his church, if illuminated at all, would have been produced not in Gaul, but in Italy or the Christian East.[2] There is one mention of the copying of the Psalms (cf. p. 356, n. 1), and probably some copying of manuscripts was done in monasteries, but we cannot say that any of it was decorative.

Ordinary writing hardly falls within the limits of this section, but literacy was so rare that the power of forming letters may have been regarded as a high accomplishment. We may perhaps infer that writing on wax tablets was still practised; in VII. 30 we read that a message from the pretender Gundovald was hidden under the wax of tablets,[3] probably written in ink on a wooden surface. It may be noted that manuscripts, which in the Merovingian period consisted almost wholly of copies of the Scriptures and Lives of the Fathers, were written upon parchment; these manuscripts were not in the form of rolls but of the *codices* resembling in shape our printed books. For royal diplomas and other official documents, as well as for those falling within the province of the notaries, the material employed was papyrus, brought from Egypt, principally to the port of Marseilles.

Mention has already been made of mosaic decoration in the interior of Merovingian churches (pp. 326–7).[4] Apart from the pavement at Thiers (p. 327), the only mosaic of Frankish times is later than the Merovingian age: the apse of Germigny-des-Prés in the diocese of Orleans still preserves a mosaic representing the Ark of the Covenant between angels, perhaps contemporary with Theodulf, bishop of Orleans, a contemporary of Alcuin, and founder of the church.[1] Later writers than Gregory inform us that S. Geneviève at Paris (formerly S. Peter), sacked by Scandinavian pirates in 857, was ornamented both with mural paintings and with mosaic.[2] The church of S. Germain-des-Prés in the same city, similarly treated in 845, had also a mosaic pavement and mural paintings.[3]

---

[1] In this connexion the fact may be recalled that when Augustine's mission was formally received by King Ethelbert of Kent, its members advanced carrying a picture of Christ (Bede, *Eccl. Hist.* i. 25).

[2] The oldest Frankish illuminated manuscripts known, those with initials in the form of birds and fish, are probably themselves later than the time of Gregory.

[3] Fortunatus (*Carm.* x. 7) mentions the use of diptychs in church for the purpose of commemorating honoured names (p. 338). These may have also been inscribed in ink within the cavity originally made for wax, after a fashion which came in at an earlier time than that of Gregory, and was later the general rule. Ecclesiastical diptychs were of ivory; consular and other large diptychs of earlier date were naturally chosen for the purpose, as affording space for a long list.

[4] M. Prou, *La Gaule mérovingienne*, pp. 215, 216. M. Prou describes the Merovingian manuscript in general, and illustrates two pages of the sixth-century Pentateuch in the Library of Lyons, each page having three columns.

We have little information as to Merovingian church plate, beyond what has been already noted (p. 333), and the facts as to chalices and patens which have survived to our own or to relatively modern times (p. 431, n. 1); the collective word for the set of objects required in a church was *ministerium*, or 'service'. Forming part of this service, in addition to the chalice and paten, we read of silver *urcei* for containing the offerings of wine (G. M. 37).[4]

Attention may be drawn to a few other passages illustrating the quality and quantity of plate and jewelled objects possessed by the Church and by wealthy persons. It has been elsewhere observed that royal villas or palaces contained treasure chambers filled with objects of very great value (p. 402). The valuable treasure of the Visigothic king Amalaric, brother-in-law of Childebert I, was indirectly the cause of his death, since in his flight from Childebert he returned from shipboard to bring it off, and was intercepted (III. 10). It included sixty chalices, fifteen patens, twenty textus-covers, all of gold set with gems, which were seized and taken to Paris by Childebert, who distributed them among the churches of his own kingdom. It is probable that the stones with which these objects were enriched were chiefly table-garnets set in cloisons, but there may have been other stones and coloured pastes. In either case these chalices and patens probably illustrate the style of work known as *orfèvrerie cloisonnée.*[1] A gold pyx was presented to a church by Felix, bishop of Bourges.[2] A gold dove, apparently a prototype of those suspended in like manner in the Middle Ages, hung over the altar at S. Denis.[3] A gold cross set with gems hung over the tomb of S. Julian at Brioude.[4] Roman onyx vessels were remounted by Merovingian goldsmiths.[5]

---

[1] A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, i, pt. i, p. 325; P. Clemen, *Die romanische Monumentalmalerei in den Rheinlanden*, 1916, pp. 183 ff., with references to the seventeenth-century accounts by Lamotte and de Chaband.

[2] R. de Lasteyrie, *L'architecture relig. en France à l'époque romane*, p. 218; Leprieur, in A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, i, pt. i, p. 325; *Hist. des Gaules*, &c., vii, p. 72.

[3] *Ibid.* iii, p. 437 (*Vita Sancti Droctovei*).

[4] Church plate was exposed not only to seizure by the chiefs or rank and file of an invading army, but to common robbery. Some Burgundians took the plate of Brioude, and four of them reached home with a paten and an *urceus* 'called *anax*', perhaps the Celtic prototype of the later *hanap*. The latter they presented to King Gundobad, cutting the paten into four pieces and each taking one (V. J. 7, 8). We may note that the silver treasure found at Traprain Law, and now in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh, had been cut into pieces for division in the same way (A. O. Curle, *The Treasure of Traprain*, 1923, p. 5).

A wonderful tale of a dishonest goldsmith, told by Gregory in another book (G. C. 62), illustrates the skill of the metal worker in Gaul. The 'Emperor Leo of Rome', in gratitude for the healing of his daughter by S. Nicetius of Lyons, sent him a gold cover for a book of the Gospels, and a chalice and paten of pure gold set with precious stones, all of which he had caused to be specially made. On the way the messenger put up for the night with a certain goldsmith. This man proposed to counterfeit the paten and gospel-cover in silver-gilt, suggesting that they should share the profit together. He then made silver-gilt substitutes, to which he re-fixed the filigree and gems (*opera quae cum gemmis filisque aureis fuerat superposita, studiosissime cum clavis adfixit*). The chalice he did not tamper with, not from any scruple, but because the stones were very solidly embedded.[1] The messenger now delivered the chalice, with the falsified paten and textus-cover, to S. Nicetius, received a reward from the bishop, and returned for his share of the plunder, but when after dinner the two confederates were sitting in the goldsmith's room, the earth opened and swallowed them up.[2] Some of the *capsae* or portable reliquaries in which relics were kept[3] were of silver; they may have resembled examples still preserved from earlier Christian times, which take the form of oval boxes, with repoussé figure-subjects on the lids and sides.

---

[1] This mode of decoration is now known to have been first introduced into Central and Western Europe because the Goths learned it from the Iranian Sarmatians in the south of Russia (cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, chs. vi and vii), and were probably accompanied by Sarmatian craftsmen. Its application to church plate in the Merovingian period is illustrated by the chalice and paten of Gourdon in the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris, and by an early reproduction of the (lost) chalice of Chelles; both of these chalices are reproduced in colours in Cabrol's *Dict. d'arch. chrét. et de liturgie*, plate opposite cols. 1627–8; the article 'Calice', by Dom Leclercq. A later chalice and paten of a like sumptuous kind are those of S. Gozlin at Nancy (E. Molinier, *L'orfèvrerie* (*Les arts appliqués à l'industrie*), p. 105). Similar rich plate probably existed in England. Bede relates (*Hist. Eccl.* ii. 20) that after the death of Edwin, Paulinus brought away a golden chalice and a large gold cross.

It is possible that the gemmed baldric with which the highwaymen sons of Waddo sought to bribe the king (X. 21) was ornamented in this way: cf. below, p. 436. The crowns of Guarrazar show that the Visigoths of Spain were adepts in *orfèvrerie cloisonnée.*

[2] Fortunatus, *Carm.* iii. 25:

Quam bene iuncta decent sacrati ut corporis agni
Margaritum ingens aurea dona ferant.

Margaritum (from μαργαρῖτις) is a term sometimes used for the Host.

[3] G. M. i. 71: *columba aurea.* Cf. Mabillon, *Liturg. Gall.* i. 9.

[4] V. J. i. 20, 44: *crux holocrysa eleganti opere facta.*

[5] One survives at St. Maurice, reproduced by E. Aubert, *Le trésor de Saint-Maurice d'Agaune.* Brunhild gave an onyx chalice to Auxerre (M. Prou, *La Gaule mérov.*, p. 270).

Tombs and altars were covered with applied plates of precious metal ornamented with designs. The tomb of S. Bibianus at Saintes, presented by Leontius, bishop of Bordeaux, and his wife Placidina, is described by Fortunatus as enriched metal ornamented with animal forms, but whether executed in relief or otherwise is not clear.[4]

From passages like these we may infer that the Merovingian churches contained furniture and sacred vessels of a splendour appropriate to the richness of their walls and roofs (p. 326).[5]

---

[1] Very probably these objects were also examples of *orfèvrerie cloisonnée*. The text runs: *Verum tamen calicem non comminuit, quia catacliza in ipso, fuerant solidata*, i.e. cataclista (κατάκλειστα: *lapilli solidius vasi inserti, opera inclusoria ac aurifabrili*, Ducange).

[2] The miraculous features of this story do not render the account of the goldsmith's proceedings less important; they illustrate the capacity of a clever craftsman at the time. For falsification of coins, cf. p. 224.

[3] In the oratory of the *domus ecclesiastica* at Tours, Gregory had a *capsa* containing various relics kept in a locked aumbry (*armarium*) under seal; he carried the key attached to his own girdle (G. M. 33). In G. M. 82 (cf. X. 1) we read of a *capsa* of relics brought from Rome to Gaul by a deacon (from Porto to Marseilles), the presence of which on the ship is held to have saved the ship from wreck. Gregory carried on his own person a gold cross containing relics of Our Lady, the Apostles, and S. Martin (G. M. i. 10). With its aid he claims to have put out a fire which was destroying a peasant's hut.

[4] *Carm.* i. 12. He says of the *pura metalla*, which included gold and silver:

Ingenio perfecta novo tabulata coruscant,
Artificemque putes hic animasse feras.

[5] For the whole subject cf. A. Marignan, *Études* &c., as above, ii, pp. 169 ff. The work of S. Éloi in the reign of Dagobert I did not, therefore, represent

Much secular work in the precious metals, whether in the form of plate or jewellery, was produced in Merovingian Gaul. The kings and queens had quantities of domestic plate and jewels; the weapons and equipment of kings and notables were mounted with precious metal and encrusted with gems. The royal treasuries were well supplied with gold,[1] and adjoining the palaces were the workshops of craftsmen (p. 403) working for the royal pleasure, among whom the silversmiths and jewellers were prominent.[2] Some of the plate was doubtless imported from the Byzantine empire, some may have survived from Roman times; but the Franks were themselves producers, and Gregory has an interesting passage on the encouragement by King Chilperic of native craftsmen. When he visited that king, at the domain of Nogent,[3] the royal enthusiast showed him a large gemmed salver of gold weighing fifty pounds, making the following comment: 'I have made these things for the culture and ennoblement of the Frankish nation. If further life attend me I shall make many more.'[4] When her daughter Chodoswind was about to marry Recared, king of the Visigoths, Brunhild sent as a present to Spain a great gold dish or salver (lit. 'shield') enriched with gems; with it she sent two basins

---

a new beginning, but the culmination of an old tradition. For S. Eloi, celebrated for the *minutissima subtilitas* of his art in metal, see the *Gesta Dagoberti*, and the Life of Audoin, in d'Achery, *Spicilegium*, v, p. 185.

[1] Part of this gold came into the country as tribute. King Theudebert had received gold from Goths and Byzantines alike to invade Italy. The Emperor Maurice Tiberius paid Childebert II 50,000 *solidi* for the same purpose when the Lombards had succeeded the Goths. He also took the money of both sides.

[2] We may suppose that the Frankish princes followed, as far as they were able, the example of the Goths. Cassiodorus (*Var.* vii. 5) tells us of the craftsmen under the control of the Cura Palatii at the Court of Theodoric. We hear of the most various artificers: *instructor parietum, sculptor marmorum, aeris fusor, camerum rotator, gypsoplastes, musivarius.* These men were probably better paid by the Ostrogothic ruler than their fellows who worked in Gaul, and Cassiodorus brings in with regard to them one of his sententious remarks: *manus larga artium nutrit ingenia, quando qui de victu non cogitat, iussa perficere festinat.*

[3] There was also present at Nogent the Jew Priscus, Chilperic's *fournisseur* of precious objects, a fact which suggests importation from Syria and the East (*Iudaeus quidam, Priscus nomine qui ei ad species coemendas familiaris erat*). Chilperic, in his mocking way, suggested that Gregory should try and convert him, which he did. But Priscus was immutable: *numquam compunctus est miser ad credendum.*

[4] VI. 2. After Chilperic's death the salver was taken from the royal villa of Chelles and given to King Childebert at Meaux (VII. 4). In an earlier passage (III. 7) we are told of another large salver or dish (*discus magnus argenteus*) belonging to Theuderic, and playing its part in a curious episode. For Merovingian plate cf. the references given by Marignan, as above, i, pp. 89, 90.

in a similar style. These objects she had caused to be specially made,[1] showing that the Austrasian court may not have been behind the Neustrian in patronage of the goldsmith's craft. During a dinner given to his bishops at Orleans in 585 Guntram commented on the silver plate upon the table, some of which had recently belonged to the traitor Mummolus. Pointing to a large dish (*catinum*), he declared that he had broken up thirteen similar dishes, only keeping this one, and another which weighed a hundred and seventy pounds.[2] Some of the traitor's plate had gone to Childebert as his share; he (Guntram) intended to give nearly all his own portion to the poor and the Church.

The personal ornaments of the Merovingian Franks are better known to us than their work on a larger scale through the discovery of so many examples in cemeteries.[3] But here, too, the aesthetic principles are oriental, and some of the methods employed had also been imported from the East of Europe. Wealthy persons were extraordinarily rich in jewellery. On Rigunth's betrothal to the Visigothic prince Recared, her father Chilperic gave her 'great treasures', while her mother, Queen Fredegund, produced 'immense weight of gold and silver', and fine raiment, such a quantity indeed that the king was afraid that she had drawn upon his own treasure, and that nothing would remain to him.[4] The queen made a public defence before a number of Frankish notables, called together to hear it, 'and so the king's mind was deceived'.[5] The chief men among the Franks themselves added rich gifts, so that when the princess started on her unfortunate journey she was followed by fifty wagons.[1] The manner in which the contents melted away during the long southward journey,[2] and the final loss of the whole when the news of Chilperic's death reached the undisciplined convoy, is to be read in the text (VI. 32 (45); VII. 9); when fifty deserters went off with fifty of the best horses at the first halt, they each took a gold-mounted bridle, while large dishes were missing.[3] After the return of the princess a horrible scene was enacted in the queen's treasure-chamber, which contained a chest full of armlets and precious ornaments.[4] The wife of Duke Rauching rode through the streets covered with jewels; a prophetess spent her gains on jewellery (VII. 43 (44)).

---

[1] *Brunechildis quoque regina iussit fabricare ex auro ac gemmis mirae magnitudinis clipeum ipsumque cum duabus pateris ligneis, quas vulgo baccenos vocant, eisdemque similiter ex gemmis fabricatis et auro* (IX. 28).

[2] VIII. 3. This must have been an enormous piece of plate, comparable to such huge pieces as were made for the Russian imperial house in the eighteenth century.

[3] Like the Iranian Persians and the Sarmatians, the Frankish craftsmen sought contrast of colour or shadow and light, always, however, keeping as far as possible to one plane, and avoiding relief. The colour in this jewellery is chiefly provided by inlay of table-garnets in gold or gilt bronze (*orfèvrerie cloisonnée*), as in the case of the rich gold chalices and patens. If animal forms were introduced, realism was avoided; designs including beasts, birds, or parts of these, were stylized; they were schemes or symbols, rather than representations. Only in Burgundy do we often find on buckles incised designs representing Christian subjects, such as Daniel between the lions.

[4] VI. 32 (45): *Traditamque Gothorum legatis, magnos ei thesauros dedit. Sed et mater eius immensum pondus auri argentique sive vestimentorum protulit, ita ut videns rex, nihil sibi remansisse putaret.*

[5] *Et sic animus regis delusus est.* Fredegund declared that all was derived from the king's gifts to her, from the generosity of the Franks themselves, and

Though the adoption of Christianity gradually put an end to the pagan Frankish custom of burying weapons and ornaments with those who had worn or used them in life we still read of the interment of ladies with jewellery of such value that the sacrilegious were induced to rob their tombs. A case of this kind is related in VIII. 21, where we find Guntram Boso sending his men to break open the tomb of a lady related to his wife in a church at Metz attached to a monastery; it was known that she had been buried *cum grandibus ornamentis et multo auro*. The men were surprised by the monks, but succeeded in getting away. Fear seized them, however, and they voluntarily returned, laying the stolen ornaments on the altar, and the responsibility on their master, who was now himself forced to take flight.

Even the travelling carriages of Teutonic princesses were decorated with silver. In 567 Fortunatus, then newly arrived

---

from her own revenues. Nothing, she declared, had been taken from the king's treasury.

[1] *Nam tanta fuit multitudo rerum ut aurum argentumque vel reliqua ornamenta quinquaginta plaustra levarent.*

[2] *Sed et per totum iter, cum labi quis potuisset, effugiebat, ferens secum quae arripere potuisset.*

[3] VI. 32 (45): *totidemque frenis aureis ac duobus catinis magnis.* The dishes were presumably also of gold, or such robbers as these would not have troubled to carry them. The princess's train was treated by the convoy as a veritable mine of treasure.

[4] IX. 34: *reseravit arcam monilibus ornamentisque preciosis refertam.* The chest must indeed have been well filled, since Fredegund kept on taking out jewels and handing them to her daughter for some time before she made the attempt upon her life.

at Poitiers, saw the ill-fated Visigothic princess Galswinth pass through the town on her way to marry Chilperic, rolling luxuriously along in a silver ' tower ' on wheels.[1]

The wearing of jewelled objects [2] was not confined to women. Among the Franks, as among the other barbaric tribes, wealthy men carried arms and equipment gemmed and enriched with gold. In the region of Nantes a pious man offered a magnificent gold baldric in church to be sold for the benefit of the poor.[3] Sons of Waddo, who had turned highwaymen, attempted to buy Childebert's favour by offering him a great baldric ornamented with gold and precious stones, and a marvellous sword, the pommel of which was covered ' with Spanish stones and gold '.[4] During the period of his adventures in search of a throne the pretender Gundovald had been wearing the fine gold baldric and the sword of his disloyal general Mummolus ; these he was compelled to take off and return to their owner before he issued from the town of Convenae to meet his death (VII. 38). The baldric which, as a gift from King Chilperic, Fredegund caused to be stripped from the person of the domestic Leunard was probably of this costly kind (VII. 15). When Duke Eberulf wished to reward an accomplice, who helped him to defraud the Church, he presented him with the golden ornaments of his baldric (VII. 22).

We read on more than one occasion of valuable gifts sent to the Frankish kings from the Court of Constantinople. Such objects may to some extent have been imitated by the goldsmiths attached to the Merovingian royal households, but it is probable that in general the Franks remained faithful to the Iranian style of jewellery to which, by its effective splendour was more adapted to their barbaric taste, than Byzantine fashions.[1]

---

[1] *Hanc ego nempe novus conspexi praetereuntem,*
Molliter argenti turre rotante vehi.

(*Carm.* vi. 7 ; an elegy on this unfortunate princess.)

[2] Frankish ornaments of the Merovingian period are to be seen in the British Museum ; there is a great collection in the Museum of Saint-Germain, and they are well represented in other French museums.

[3] G. M. i. 60 : *baltheum ex auro purissimo cum omni apparatu studiosissime fabricatum.*

[4] X. 21 : *offerentes balteum magnum ex auro lapidibusque pretiosis ornatum, gladiumque mirabile, cuius capulum ex gemmis Hispanis auroque dispositum erat.* The description suggests the *orfèvrerie cloisonnée* in which Visigothic goldsmiths were especially skilful ; cf. p. 431 above. The best-known example of Frankish weapons ornamented in this style are those presumed to have belonged to King Childeric, now preserved in the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris ; see note to VII. 33.

The Frankish metal workers were evidently skilful in gilding, as we have already learned from their debasement of the coinage (p. 224). Certain Saxons under the suzerainty of King Sigibert on their return home from Lombardy cheated the people of Auvergne by offering them in payment bars of gilded bronze which were accepted as gold (IV. 29 (42)). The Saxons had themselves been cheated in the same way by Mummolus.

We may notice a few facts recorded of other crafts. Various glass vessels are mentioned in Gregory's writings. Some may have been an inheritance from Roman times. In the *cellula* at Candes, where Martin died, was a blue ' crystal ' paten which may well have been one of those shallow bowls of coloured glass on which the Romans set such store.[2] Relating the pious frauds to which his ancestor, Gregory of Langres, resorted in order to conceal his ascetic habits, Gregory says that the bishop used a coloured or opaque drinking-glass, that the curious might not detect the fact that it only contained water ; it is clear that this glass, if not red, was of some dark colour.[3] Most of the glass used in church or house must have been contemporary ; the Teutonic tribes, as can be seen in our museums, were no mean glass makers. The abbess Agnes, sending out dainty meals to Fortunatus, makes use of glass dishes,[4] which need not have been beyond the powers of Frankish manufacturers. The coloured pastes imitating garnet and ruby, used to enrich surviving buckles, brooches, and other personal ornaments, as well as objects of a religious character, were in all likelihood made for the most part in the Rhine valley, where traditions of the glass industry must have survived

---

[1] Except in so far as these were themselves under Iranian influence.

[2] In G. M. i. 45 a deacon in S. Lorenzo at Milan drops and breaks a ' crystal ' chalice (*calix cristallinus mira pulchritudine*), which, placed upon the altar, is miraculously mended. This also may have been an ' antique ', though it is probable that some of the lamps, described as broken in falling, may have contained glass receptacles for oil of contemporary manufacture. Probably the lamps fitting into the crown-lights of the type of the Byzantine *polycandelon*, used for church illumination, were small conical cups of glass, such as are seen in manuscripts of rather later date.

[3] V. P. vii. 2 : *tale vitrum elegens qui claritatem aquae obtegeret.*

[4] *Vitreo scutella rotatu* (Fortunatus, *Carm.* xi. 10) ; the glass dishes were accompanied by silver ones, and by a salver (*discus*) of marble. A glass ampulla is mentioned in V. S. M. ii. 32, and there can be no doubt that there was a large production of such small bottles, both for ecclesiastical and domestic use.

Roman times. Several passages in Gregory show that church windows were filled with glass, and from one passage we learn that the glass was fixed in a wooden framework (p. 328); the palaces and better houses must have had windows of a similar kind. Such plain glass as that used in windows must have been made in many parts of Gaul.

Pottery must have been in regular use for domestic purposes, but there is no mention of particular vessels from which an idea of character and forms can be obtained. Frankish pottery is chiefly known from that discovered in graves, which is unglazed, and of a greyish tone, with very simple decoration. The floral and figured motives, of Roman pottery are not found, and the fine red ware ('Samian', 'Arretine') for which Gaul was so noted under the empire was no longer produced. The utensils of Gregory's time must have been rougher and less decorative than those used in the Roman province.

Silk altar coverings, probably figured and of oriental origin, are frequently mentioned by Gregory; such silks were used as hangings, altar-coverings, or wrappings for venerated objects, such as crosses. Two passages[1] describe silks embroidered with gold and enriched with jewels. There are other fine fabrics the nature of which we cannot always determine.[2] Fortunatus (*Carm.* ii. 3) mentions a silk textile, apparently inwoven with crosses, placed by Gregory in an oratory at Tours;[3] this may be the stuff brought to him from the East, and said by the bringer to have enwrapped the Cross of Christ (G. M. 6). Silk, which had been used for personal attire in the fifth century by Frankish princes,[4] no doubt continued to serve the same purpose in the sixth. The kings and their families, and the notables, must have used silk freely for garments, and the material may have been partly woven for them at their *villae* (p. 405) from imported silk.

---

[1] G. M. i. 71. At S. Denis: an Austrasian notable steals: *pallam holosiricam auroque exornatam et gemmis quae sanctum tegebat sepulchrum.* In G. M. v, a silk *palla* is mentioned as having served as a wrapping for a cross. At Gerona, in Spain, a thief escapes with *pallis sericis textis auro monilibusque exornatis.* These silk textiles, often richly figured, came from the Christian East, and some may have been Sassanian. Their general character may be seen from examples in churches and museums (the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington is rich), and from good illustrated works such as that of O. von Falke, *Geschichte der Seiden.*

[2] For example, that taken from the church at Convenae when it was sacked at the time of Gundovald's capture, because the reading *coopertorium* '*Sarmaticum*' is uncertain (V. P. viii. 11). The context shows that it was of a thin and loosely woven fabric.

[3] *Serica quae niveis sunt agnava blattea telis*
Et textis crucibus magnificatur opus.

[4] Sidonius, *Ep.* iv. 20, of a young Frank named Sigismer.

Linen fabrics were sometimes embroidered with gold and sewn with gems.[1] Coarser fabrics of various kinds were used as hangings and as coverings for seats (*stragula*). Those used in the palaces or *villae* were probably made in the workrooms attached to the house.[2] But weaving of this kind must have been general in the towns and even in the villages. This section may be concluded by noting the existence in Merovingian times of those artists who cut and make up woven fabrics for wear. Gregory mentions that among persons who visited S. Martin's to be cured of illness was a Parisian tailor: *puer Parisiacus cui artis erat vestimenta componere.*[3]

It is natural that Gregory should more often allude to music in connexion with the services of the Church (p. 342) than in its relation to ordinary life. But even of ecclesiastical music, of which he knew most, he tells us little that is informative; of secular music we learn practically nothing of importance. The Franks were evidently not without inclination to music. We learn from Cassiodorus (*Var.* ii. 40–1) that 'Luduin (Clovis), king of the Franks', sent to Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, begging him to provide him with a lyre-player (*citharoedus*); and that Theodoric complied because he knew Luduin to be a real lover of music. A player was sent, able to delight the Frank with skill of hand and voice, and to tame savage hearts like a new Orpheus.[4] Fortunatus, more observant than Gregory of profane delights, tells of the Austrasian king and his company entertained by music of 'organs' and metal instruments as they float down the Rhine at Coblentz (*Carm.* x. 10). He also twice (*Carm.* i. 1; vii. 8) mentions the harp as a German instrument, in the second passage contrasting it with the Roman lyre; after the barbaric *harpa,* he speaks of the *chrotta Britanna,* meaning a stringed instrument of the Bretons.[1] From such scanty allusions we may infer that music was at least alive in Gaul. It is probable that notwithstanding all the disturbance and oppression of a troubled age people of all classes found still time and courage to dance and sing.

---

[1] Fortunatus, *Vit. S. Radegundis*, ch. 9: a *mafortis*, or tunic (?), was thus adorned. One of the charges against the abbess Leubovera, in the trial at Poitiers, concerned a *mafortis*.

[2] The father of two girls, Merofled and Marcovefa, whom King Charibert successively married, was a weaver, one of the *fiscalini* attached to the royal *villa* (IV. 19 (26)).

[3] V. S. M. ii. 58. He was *ingenuus genere*, though Leudast, the evil count of Tours, accused him of being a fugitive slave.

[4] *Qui ore manibusque consona voce cantando gloriam vestrae potestatis oblectat . . . facturus aliquid Orphei, cum dulci sono gentilium fera corda domuerit. . . .*

---

[1] The player of the *harpa* was the bishop of Chartres (vii, 8). Fortunatus also alludes to the *barbitus* (*Carm.* xi. 10), and the *cithara* (*ibid.* vi. 10); in vii. 8 he further mentions the flute or pipe (*fistula, tibia*). The *chrotta* may be connected with *rotta* of the later Middle Ages, and with the *crwth.*

IV

PLEASURE AND AMUSEMENTS

THE Gaul of Gregory was a less cheerful country than that which Sidonius knew in the fifth century. Then people went for picnics and played various ball-games in the open air; they exchanged literary compositions; their amusements were those of a civilized people. If these amenities continued among the Gallo-Romans of the mid-sixth century the History says little or nothing of them.[1] Gaul was sadder and less cultured, in its diversions as in other departments of its life. Out of doors we hear of nothing but the chase,[2] and, on one occasion, of the baiting of beasts with dogs at the palace of Metz. This brutal sport was in full swing before King Childebert when the doomed Magnovald was summoned to meet his end (VIII. 36).[3] The last pleasure that he enjoyed was to look on for a while at a spectacle as congenial to himself as to those who had determined upon his own death. It is probable that this beast-baiting was generally exhibited to the people of the towns. In a remarkable passage (V. 11 (17)), King Chilperic, as a gesture of contempt for the temporary alliance against him of his brother Guntram with his nephew Childebert, is said to have ordered the erection of amphitheatres at Paris and Soissons, with provision of shows for the people.[4] These shows probably

In the Prologue to the *In Gloria Confessorum* Gregory derives a metaphor from an organized ball-game, speaking of *sphaeristarum ordines*. This is, perhaps, no more than a literary example, drawn from an earlier author, such as Sidonius. But it is just possible that the old ball-games mentioned by that author had not completely died out.

[2] *Falconarii* occur in Charles the Great's capitulary, *De villis* (ch. 47), and hawking was a sport in Merovingian times; cf. A. Marignan, as above, i, p. 206 n.

[3] VIII. 36: *stante infra Metensis urbis palacium rege(m), et ludum expectante, qualiter animal caterva canum circumdatum fatigabatur.*

[4] V. 11 (17): *Quod ille dispiciens apud Suessionas atque Parisius circos aedificare praecipit, eosque populis spectaculum praebens.* Frankish kings had presided in the circus at Arles. Games had been kept up in the Roman Circus under Theodoric the Ostrogoth in the early part of the sixth century. Cassiodorus (*Var.* iii. 51) describes the circus. He mentions a famous charioteer *ex orientis partibus* named Thomas, who always seemed to win

included beast-baitings, though perhaps the juggling and gymnastic displays of the hippodrome in contemporary Byzantium may have found imitation in the West. The less degrading excitement of the chase was, however, the principal sport of the Franks. The start on a bright day must have been one of the most cheerful sights in the Merovingian Age.[1] There was the king with his friends, all richly clad, equipped with their spears and hunting-knives, the king carrying his horn;[2] there were the huntsmen and the hounds, and the spectators from the household to watch them set forth. The chief beasts hunted were the boar and the deer. The pursuit of the boar was a general form of the chase in forest and wild country. In his *Lives of the Fathers* (XII. 2) Gregory has an edifying tale of a conversion caused by a chance encounter between a young sportsman and a recluse in Auvergne. Brachio, the son of Sigivald, Austrasian governor of the region, and a relation of the king, was hunting the boar with great hounds (*molossi*). The beast took refuge at the entrance of the hermitage, where it stood quietly, divinely assured of safety from the dogs. Brachio, coming up, made acquaintance with the saint, who proved himself a successful hunter of souls. Stag-hunting was evidently popular; it supplies Gregory with a vivid metaphor when he describes the undignified escape of Prince Chlodovech from Bordeaux, pursued by the partisans of Sigibert to the sound of horns, 'like a stag in flight.'[3] Apart from the wild ox the northern forests of the Ardennes and Vosges yielded the best game to the hunter of Merovingian times. Fortunatus, in a poem addressed to Gogo, mentions the game there which might be shot with the arrow, or speared, or taken in nets: stags, goats, bears,

---

even with the most unlikely horses, so that he was known as 'the wizard' (*maleficum*). Cf. also *Var.* v. 42, in which allusion is made to cruel beast-fights.

[1] But hunting had its sinister side. Though the pursuit of wild animals was elsewhere free (Petit-Dutaillis, as below, p. 117), the royal forests were strictly preserved, and poaching was savagely punished. Even the usually genial Guntram had a loyal servant and friend put to death for having presumed to kill an aurochs or bison in one of the royal forests (X. 10). For royal game-preserving cf. A. Thierry, *Dix ans d'études hist.* (1836), p. 369. Ch. Petit-Dutaillis, *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, lxxvi, 1915, pp. 115 ff.

[2] King Guntram carried a horn: *cuius voce molossos colligere vel illa corneorum arboreorum armenta effugare consueverat* (G. C. 86).

[3] IV. 33 (47): *quem fugientem cum tubis et bucinis quasi labentem cervum fugans, insequebatur.*

'buffaloes', wild asses, boars.[1] In the same poem Fortunatus implies that Gogo may have gone salmon-fishing in the Rhine.[2] Allusion has been made elsewhere to salmon-catching, watched by King Childebert from his palace on the banks of the river (p. 406).

On indoor games and amusements little light is thrown; curiously enough the nunnery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers provides the most noticeable example. Among the offences laid by the rebellious nuns against their abbess Leubovera were her permission of mimes[3] in the monastery, and her habit of playing 'backgammon'.[4] Nothing is said of the various gambling games with dice which were so excessively popular in Gaul at the time of Sidonius. In one of his works[5] Gregory alludes to a king's mime, though in Galicia, not in Gaul. But it is probable that there too the licensed buffoon was no less popular in Merovingian royal households than in those of the Middle Ages. We have seen that music was sometimes enjoyed at the courts, and perhaps it was more common in the houses of the great than the absence of allusions in Gregory's works might lead us to assume.

Frankish banquets, though often enough very gross, were not always devoted to mere animal satisfaction. Sometimes there was pointed conversation, and entertainment of an unusual kind. At Orleans in 585 Guntram entertained many bishops at his table (VIII. 2, 3). Before dinner he rebuked

---

[1] *Carm.* vii. 4, ll. 17 ff.:

saltusque pererrans
Cuspide, rete, feras hinc legat inde necat?
Ardennae an Vosagi, cervi, caprae, helicis ursi
Caede sagittifera sylva fragore tonat?
Seu validi bufali ferit inter cornua campum,
Nec mortem differt ursus, onager, aper?

For the possibility that *bufalus* in the above passage may refer to the aurochs (*urus*) or the bison, rather than to the buffalo, cf. note to X. 10.

[2] *Ibid.*, ll. 5, 6:

Si prope fluctivagi remoratur littora Rheni
Ut salmonis adeps rete trahatur aquis.

[3] The word used is *barbaturiae*, on which see note to X. 16. Doubtless the performances in this case were harmless enough.

[4] The game is simply called *tabulae*, perhaps a kind of backgammon; cf. 'Fredegar', iv. 37, where Protadius plays in the king's tent. But whatever the variety her indulgence was probably very innocent. As she herself urged in her defence, the saintly Radegund had allowed the game. For board-games in Gaul cf. *The Letters of Sidonius*, trs. Dalton, i, p. cxi.

[5] V. S. M. iv. 7: *Mimus regius, qui ei per verba iocularia laetitiam erat solitus excitare*

Bertram of Bordeaux and Palladius of Saintes for having favoured the cause of the pretender Gundovald, and sarcastically asked two other bishops what they had done for the safety of his kingdom? On their silence he washed his hands and set himself down to dinner, very pleased with himself (*leto vultu et hilari facie*). Half way through the meal he made Gregory order his deacon to sing; after which nothing would serve but that all the deacons of the bishops present must follow suit; the deacons rose to the occasion, each chanting his psalm.[1] When the bishops were invited again on another day, there was an unseemly altercation between Bertram and Palladius, which Gregory laments.[2] The same king's dinner at Chalon on Easter Sunday in 587 to the envoys of Childebert, of whom Gregory was one, was sumptuous and gay, with laden dishes and large festivity.[3] In connexion with banquets, the fact may be noted that Gregory sometimes speaks of guests as 'reclining' at table, as if the old Roman couches were still used, and not chairs.[4] He either alludes to Gallo-Romans, or indulges his fondness for poetical or semi-poetical words derived from his limited classical reading, for the Franks used benches and chairs.[5]

The cook was an important person in the household. In the story of the escape of Attalus, nephew of S. Gregory, bishop of Langres, Leo, the bishop's cook, played a most resourceful part, getting himself engaged by the Frank in whose household Attalus worked as a slave, and making himself so popular by his good cookery that he was placed in a position of trust, and was thus able to secure the escape of the captive;[6] he seems chiefly to have established his reputation by dishes composed of chicken. We have seen that when Fortunatus was upon a journey, a royal cook presumed to take his boat from him for his own conveyance, which shows that he regarded himself as a person of no small consequence.[1] This writer supplements the information gleaned from Gregory by a number of allusions to the hospitalities of Radegund and the abbess Agnes at the Monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, and to the delectable gifts which they sent out to him for his comfort. He tells of a whole dinner thus sent by Agnes. One dish was piled with meat 'hill-high', and enriched with varied dainties;[2] the poet claims to have accounted for the whole:

---

[1] *Quisque, ut potuit . . . psalmum responsurium decantavit.*

[2] *Ibid.* viii. 7.

[3] *Non minus oneratum in ferculis quam letitiae opulentum* (IX. 20).

[4] V. 46. Cf. V. P. viii. 3: *convivio recumbens, ad cuius ego laevam . . . propinquus accubueram.*

[5] Reclining was still the custom in the fifth century, as we learn from Sidonius; in the fourth century it was one of the grievances of Gallo-Romans against S. Martin that he would not recline at dinner, preferring to use a chair, and their descendants in Gregory's day may have preserved the old usage. Cf. A. Marignan, i, p. 87.

[6] III. 15. Leo says to the Frank: *In omnibus quae manducare debent in mensis dominorum valde scitus sum operare, nec metuo quod repperiri possit similis mei in hac scientia. Verum enim dico tibi, quia etiam si regi epulo cupias praeparare, fercula regalia conponere possum, nec quisquam a me melius.* The Frank puts him to the test at a dinner on the next Sunday, attended by his relatives and neighbours. He replies: *Iubeat dominus meus pullorum gallina-*

Haec ego nunc avidus superavi cuncta gulosus.

On a second occasion, a sumptuous meal is again dispatched; meat in silver dishes with gravy or sauce; vegetables or fruit on a dish of marble; chicken; apples in baskets; milk in a black jar.[3] Another time, when he is invited by the ex-queen and the abbess, the room is bright with a profusion of roses and lilies.[4] He is regaled with milk and cream,[5] plums, and eggs, the dishes being of such variety that he perceived the signs of internal discord and exclaims: *ventri utinam pax sit, sic variante cibo!*[6] He seems to have found that the excellent kitchen of his friend, the Austrasian Gogo, subjected his constitution, in like manner, to a severe strain (*Carm.* vii. 2). Though he makes no pretence to asceticism he confesses that his powers of resistance are often overcome. One day he

---

ciorum multitudinem et faciam quae praecepis. When the Sunday came: *fecit aepulum magnum deliciisque refertum*, which gave full satisfaction. Afterwards he was given charge of his master's storeroom, and dispensed food and drink (*cybaria et pulmenta*) to the whole household.

[1] *Carm.* vi. 10. A 'tip' is mentioned in V. P. vi, 3 as given to the cook of King Theuderic by Bishop Gallus after a banquet given in his honour by the king. It amounted to a *triens*, or third of a *solidus*.

[2] *Carm.* xi. 9:

Praeterea venit missus cum collibus altis
Undique carnali monte superbus apex.
Delitiis cunctis, quas terra, vel unda ministrat,
Compositis epulis hortulus intus erat.

[3] *Ibid.* 10: Radegund herself seems to have abstained from eating when she and Agnes entertained Fortunatus (*ibid.* 22).

[4] *Ibid.* 11.

[5] *Ibid.* 14, 15, 19.

[6] *Ibid.* 20. Told to take two eggs, he confesses to have imbibed four:

Vobis vera loquar, quattuor ipse bibi.

partakes of milk, vegetables, eggs, and butter 'to distention';[1] he drinks without too much caution and falls asleep.[2] He does his best to repay all this hospitality, sending by way of return a basket of chestnuts, the basket made by himself, together with another object of his own handiwork, and some black plums (*pruna nigella*).[3] Some of the *eulogiae* for which the poet sends his thanks may have been friendly gifts of delicacies. In a letter to the Abbess Agnes, headed: *Ad eandem, pro eulogiis transmissis* (*Carm.* xi. 9) there is no allusion to anything but delicacies for the table, too sumptuous in kind to be described as *eulogiae* in the strict sense.[4]

Freshwater fish formed a regular feature in the diet of the time. A bishop was killed through eating fish poisoned by his enemies (V. 36). A huge *esoc*, caught in the river by a fisherman,[5] was the *pièce de résistance* of a dinner given by the archpriest of Artonne (Puy-de-Dôme) to the clergy who had come to attend the festival of S. Vitalina (G. C. 5). Eggs, as we have already learned from Fortunatus, were popular, sometimes alone, at other times as component parts of elaborate dishes. An egg-dish, eaten in the households of the time, is described by Gregory; it was seasoned with olives and dates.[6]

Wine was the chief alcoholic drink, but we also read of ale and perry. A pious man in Auvergne orders beer to be prepared for his seventy reapers. He goes into the town, and on his return finds that his own servants (*ut mos servorum est*) have drunk most of it.[7] A lady living at Lyons, as an offering to secure the repose of her deceased husband, furnished the church regularly with a fixed quantity of Gaza wine, which was kept for use at the Eucharist in the *sacrarium*, where her husband was buried.[1] A worthless subdeacon, reserving the wine for his own use, supplied the strongest form of vinegar in its place. Hereupon the shade of the dead man complains to his spouse: 'Alas, alas! dearest wife, what an end to my life's labours that now I should have to drink not wine of oblation, but vinegar!'[2] She replied, 'But it was the strongest Gaza wine that I offered for thy repose'. She then herself communicated, with startling results; had she not swallowed quickly, her teeth 'would have been shaken out of her'.[3] After this experience she accuses the subdeacon, who confesses, repents, and amends his ways.

---

[1] *Deliciis variis tumido me ventre tetendi*
Omnia sumendo, lac, holus, ova, butyr. (*Ibid.* 23.)

[2] *Ipsa videbatur mensa natare mero.* (*Ibid.* 24.)

[3] *Ibid.* xi. 13, 17, 18.

[4] The word *eulogia* seems to have had a wide connotation, and to have included any kind of complimentary present. The Rule of S. Benedict contains the following prohibition: *nullatenus licet Monacho nec a parentibus suis, nec a quoquam hominum . . . litteras, aut eulogias, vel quaelibet munuscula accipere.* Here the sense is merely 'present'.

[5] It was taken in a *lapsus* (. . *aquae divortium*). Cf. V. P. xvii. 3. Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* iii, ch. 13, mentions a huge specimen of the same kind of fish as caught in a net in a river. The *lapsus* of a fisherman on the Marne one day received the dead body of Prince Chlodovech, murdered by order of his stepmother Fredegund and thrown into the river (VIII. 10).

[6] *Cuius in medium* (i.e. of the dish) *sartago fervens advenerat in qua compositum erat cibum illud quod ex conlisis ovis parumper mixta farina dactilorum partibus olivarumque rotunditatibus adsolet ornari* (G. M. 79).

[7] G. C. 1: *iubet fieri ex annonis aqua infusis et decoctis messoribus poculum praeparari. Hanc enim coctionem Orosius a coquendo 'caeliam' vocari narravit*

The chapters of the History afford only too frequent examples of the excess in eating and drinking which characterized the times. These need not here be quoted, but there is something of decadent Roman habits in the conduct of Parthenius, who aided Theudebert to tax the people, and was in consequence murdered on that king's death. He was a voracious glutton, who stimulated his appetite with aloes.[4]

The foregoing pages will suggest that, for all its backwardness in many essential respects, Merovingian society had a somewhat greater share in the material amenities of life than has commonly been supposed.

(Or. v. 7, § 13): Orosius adds, says Gregory, that the drink is known as *zythum* in Egypt, *caelia* and *cerea* in Spain, *ceraesia* in Gaul. The deceived landholder prayed for divine aid, and one vessel of beer provided refreshment for all the seventy men.

[1] G. C. 64. For Gaza wine cf. Arndt's note to VII. 29 in M. G. H. This wine, from the Palestinian Gaza, was in great repute in late Roman times and afterwards. Cf. Sidonius, *Carm.* xvii. 15; Isidore, *Origines*, xxiii; Corippus, *De laude Iustini*, iii. 87 (*Mon. Germ. Hist., Auctores antiquissimi*, iii, p. 139). Eberulf in sanctuary at S. Martin's at Tours entertained his secret enemy, Claudius, with strong wines (*Laticina videlicet atque Gazitina*), of which he boasted that he had store (VII. 26 (29)).

[2] *In quo defluxit labor meus in saeculo, ut nunc acetum in oblationem delibem*

[3] *Quae tam ferventem acetum hausit ex calice ut putaret sibi dentes excuti si haustum segnius deglutisset.*

[4] *Fuit autem in cybis valde vorax, sed quae sumebat quo celerius ad manducandum commoveretur, sumpto aloe, velociter digerebat* (III. 36).

GEN. THEO. SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

Printed in England
At the Oxford University Press
By John Johnson
Printer to the University

DATE DUE

HIGHSMITH # 45220

DC 64 .G713 1927 v.1

Gregory, 538-594.

The history of the Franks

[illegible]
NEW YORK

GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
00013224